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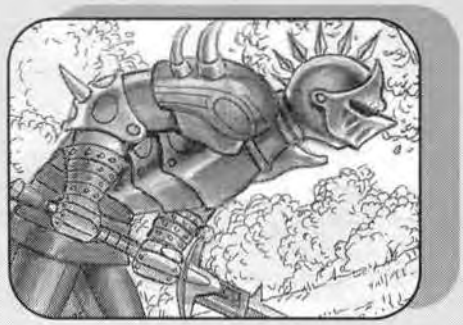
Cover

Jeff Easley graces our cover for the first time with a spectacular depiction of the beholder's Doom Brigade from "Sleep of Ages."



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"Neither the memory of man nor the annals of the historians reach back far enough to tell us when the first men came up from the sea and built cities on the shore. But Kull, men were not always ruled by men!"

— Robert E. Howard
The Shadow Kingdom

The horrors of Wolfhill House are mean and many.

SLAVE VATS OF THE YUAN-TI

BY JASON KUHL

Into the Mere

Artwork by Terry Dykstra
Cartography by Diesel

Jason writes: "Those intrigued by Wolfhill House are encouraged to visit its real-life inspiration in Salem, MA. The Peabody Essex Museum features a strange yet fascinating assortment of whaling relics, Polynesian totems, mounted animals, and maritime art."

"Slave Vats of the Yuan-ti" is an AD&D scenario for 4–6 PCs of levels 3–5 (about 20 total levels). Having a thief or other rogue in the party is recommended, as there are several traps throughout the adventure.

DMs should reacquaint themselves with the *enlarge* spell before running this module. During the session, keeping a calculator close at hand for quick math is also a good idea.

This is the first adventure in the *Mere of Dead Men* series. Before running the adventure, the DM should carefully review the information in the sidebar on page 12.

Adventure Background

The PCs travel north along the High Road from Waterdeep to Iniarv's Tower, taking three days to reach the tower by foot or one day on horseback. There are no significant encounters en route to the tower unless the DM deems otherwise. Once the PCs reach their destination, read or paraphrase the following:

> Sir Justin Melenikus gestures toward the collapsing tower of the demilich Iniarv. "As I'm sure you're aware," he begins, "These ruins have been occupied time and again. Bandits, orcs, fugitives—any riffraff with enough gall to brandish a sword—has sought refuge here. It wasn't any different when we arrived last week. Although the previous occupants put up quite a fight, we didn't think the fellows who lit out of here were anything but the typical rag-tag group of highwaymen. There were no prisoners to question, so we had no reason to think otherwise. That is, until we settled in ourselves."
>
> "The previous occupants had quite a cache of goods stored in the tower's cellar: food, clothes, armor, weapons—enough for a small army. There were tools and weirder stuff, too—alchemical equipment from the looks of it—all of which points

to only one conclusion: these men weren't merely bandits, but smugglers. Moreover, we suspect that their leader was none other than Esau Enoch, a notorious underworld figure with criminal connections spanning from Shou Lung and Chult to the Cult of the Dragon right here in Faerûn.

"We believe that Enoch was smuggling supplies from Waterdeep and Undermountain to camps or bases in the Mere of Dead Men. Where these bases are, what they're for, and who's running them are questions I'd like answered. Of course, the only man who can do that for me isn't readily available—but I have a pretty good idea of where to find him."

The knight unfurls a crude sketch of a map. "I'm ashamed to say that Enoch and his chief lieutenants escaped during the initial rout; the night was very dark, and we misjudged the extent of their defenses. However, several sightings in the Mere by routine patrols—all of which Enoch eventually eluded—indicate that Esau was moving in a southwesterly direction. That leads me to believe that they were heading here—" Justin stabs at the map. "Wolfhill House."

"The abandoned estate once belonged to Hezekiel Wolf, a wealthy sea merchant who lived two centuries ago. He died soon after finishing the manor. The place has since been swallowed by the swamp. There are unsubstantiated stories about ghosts. Travelers have reported that the insects around the manor are utterly monstrous.

"I suspect Enoch and his men are holed up in Wolfhill House. They're cut off from the High Road by my watchers, biding time until they recuperate and re-organize, and the house is the only building for miles around. I want you to go in there and get Enoch—and if you can't capture him alive, then I want information on his current operations. In return, you can keep anything valuable that doesn't pertain to Enoch and his activities plus, of course, a generous explorers' fee."

Melenikus rolls up the map and hands it to one of you. "Well? You feel like getting your boots wet?"

For the Dungeon Master

Wolfhill House is more than just an easy rendezvous point for Esau Enoch and his forces; it is, in fact, one of the very bases to which Enoch was running supplies as part of a cloning conspiracy orchestrated by that sinister race of megalomaniacal serpent men known as the yuan-ti. One of Enoch's abomination masters has established a secret laboratory in the cellars beneath Wolfhill House. There, the yuan-ti have been cloning a super race of humans who are loyal to the wicked yuan-ti. Esau Enoch, who is himself a pureblood yuan-ti (and thus passes for human), served as a liaison between the civilized world and the lab, trafficking those wares required for the cloning process.

Enoch's superiors are not happy with his failure to avoid expulsion by Justin Melenikus and his watchers, and they are even less pleased that he has brought unwanted attention to Wolfhill House by using it as a safe haven. Fortunately for him, Enoch has devised a ruse for just such an emergency. Months ago, Enoch took the liberty of cloning himself and keeping the result under lock and key in the cellars of the manor, his intention being eventually to use the clone as a "fall guy."

Wolfhill House represents only one yuan-ti outpost in the Mere. This might be the only base to which Esau Enoch was smuggling supplies, or it could be a part of a larger network fleshed out by the DM.

Melenikus outfits the party with whatever basic sundries they require (rations, water, rope, etc.). He also provides a rough map depicting Iniarv's Tower, the Mere of Dead Men, and a carriage path linking the High Road to Wolfhill House. In addition to the curative magic bestowed by his priests (see sidebar on page 28), he also provides each PC with a vial containing one application of an unguent that acts as the priest spell *repel insects* cast at 10th level.

Wolfhill House

Originally, the rise upon which Wolfhill House is built lay far above the edge of the Mere of Dead Men, and though the hill's environs had long had a dark reputation because of the astonishing size of its fauna and flora, Hezekiel Wolf thought it a perfect place to construct his manor. It provided access to civilization (via a carriage trail linking the estate to the High Road) and to the ocean, yet it offered all of the sporting comforts of country living. Additionally, it contained a sprawling showcase for Wolf's collection of treasures taken from distant realms. It was the reward that Wolf owed himself after a lifetime of hard work.

Yet Wolf's good luck came to a sudden end. Several of the servants quickly fell victim to monstrous ticks and spiders. The waters of the Mere rose with every spring runoff until Wolfhill House itself was in danger. Finally, what few servants remained deserted the House, leaving Wolf to die an isolated, broken man.

What Wolf never understood is that the hill upon which he built his home exudes a potent magical dweomer that affects all living things within a quarter-mile radius as if they were struck by the 1st-level wizard spell *enlarge*. The exact size attained by a target depends upon the duration spent within the field of influence; most creatures grow 10% of their natural height and weight for every four months of uninterrupted exposure. These effects are permanent, cumulative, and cannot be dispelled. Only immature, developing animals and plants are susceptible—a full-grown person is not. Creatures with any kind of magic resistance (even dwarves, elves, and those with similar immunities) are also immune.

The hill's aura, however, has much more discernible consequences on those who wander into its sphere. Any spell cast within a quarter mile of Wolfhill House has a 25% chance of misfiring and striking a nearby being with *enlarge* cast at the spellcaster's level. If used in combat, the misfire has an equal chance of hitting either friend or foe (with all the benefits thereof) and, unlike the genetic alteration detailed above, is temporary in nature, lasting only five rounds per level of the caster. It can be dispelled or negated with *reduce* (*enlarge* reversed), although such a spell has the same chance of misfiring as any other spell. Magical armor, weapons, potions, rings, and other items producing spell-like effects are excepted

Series Overview

The Mere of Dead Men is a vast salt swamp that stretches along the Sword Coast north of Waterdeep. The Mere is desolate, insect-ridden, and home to hundreds of monstrous denizens. Only the boldest (or most foolhardy) adventurers equipped with magical items and water breathing magic dare enter the Mere, but even fewer survive to tell the tales of their heroic exploits.

Several castles and manor houses stand flooded in the Mere, with only their spires and battlements jutting above the fetid waters. Long abandoned by their owners, these sunken dwellings are more often warded by powerful, lingering magics and the fell beasts of the swamp. The Mere of Dead Men series explores several of these sites in greater detail, describing the magics and terrors within.

The Overplot

Edging along the eastern edge of the Mere is the High Road, a vital and well-traveled route linking Waterdeep to the northern town of Leilon and, north of that, the city of Luskan. Over the past several months, the trade road between Waterdeep and Leilon has been plagued by monsters from the Mere. Caravans report brutal attacks by lizard men on catoblepas mounts, yuan-ti, gargantuan bullywugs, and will o' wisps. There have even been confirmed sightings of a huge black lizard skulking through the Mere. Sir Justin Melenikus, a Waterdhavian knight and paladin of Helm, has grown weary of these attacks and offered his services to the city. Sir Justin and his watchers (specialty priests of Helm) recently left Waterdeep and headed north, clearing bandits out the ruins of the demilich Iniarv's tower (on the edge of the Mere) and turning the site into their encampment.

Melenikus and his watchers have garnered enthusiastic support from the Lords of Waterdeep, the Waterdhavian Merchants' Guild, and the local Adventurers' Guild. In fact, a notice has been posted prominently in the Adventurers' Guildhall:

"Sir Justin Melenikus, a renowned knight of Helm, needs brave and hearty adventurers to help slay monstrous threats from the dreaded Mere of Dead Men. Fell creatures have been attacking caravans on the High Road, slaughtering travelers, and endangering Waterdeep's trade with its northern neighbors. Unless the monsters are defeated, all trade to the north could be halted. Sir Justin and his watchers have made camp in the ruins of Iniarv's Tower, located four days' walk toward Leilon. Interested parties should meet with Sir Justin in person.

"Rewards for slain monsters shall be authorized by Sir Justin. Gold shall be paid by the Free Merchants' Guild upon presentation of a stamped writ from the knight himself."

A handful of adventurers have already left the city for Iniarv's Tower, a ruins located in the foothills east of the Mere. Luckily, there are enough monsters in the Mere of Dead Men to occupy more than a few adventurous bands. Sir Justin is sending several groups into the swamp to rout the monsters. This series explores the party's investigation of several key sites where monsters are thought or known to dwell. Using *divination* spells, the watchers have determined that a great evil lurks in the Mere, and that the recent attacks on the High Road are somehow related.

Camp at Iniarv's Tower

When the heroes arrive at Iniarv's Tower, they are well met by Sir Justin. Each time he sends them into the Mere, he promises to reward them with a writ that they can keep and take back to Waterdeep to exchange for gold coins. The amount of the reward varies depending on the party's degree of success (determined by the DM). Sir Justin also offers the following benefits:

❖ Heroes who return to Iniarv's Tower in the course of an adventure may receive any of the following curative magics from the Watchers: *cure light wounds* (up to 8/day), *cure serious wounds* (up to 4/day), *cure blindness or deafness* (up to 8/day), *cure disease* (up to 8/day), *neutralize poison* (up to 6/day), *raise dead* (up to 3/day).

❖ Before embarking on an expedition into the Mere, the PCs receive the following items: three potions of *extra-healing* (or one potion of *healing* per character), two clerical scrolls (*neutralize poison* and *cure disease*) in water-tight bone tubes, and minor *rings of water breathing* (one per PC). Each ring's magic lasts 12 days from the time it is first worn, after which the ring loses its enchantment.

Neither Sir Justin nor the watchers accompany adventurers into the Mere. Their job to the coordinate missions from their base camp, dispense healing and rewards, and outfit new bands of heroes.

Sir Justin Melenikus (9th-level paladin of Helm): AL LG; AC 0; MV 12; Pa9; hp 73; THAC0 12 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SD detect evil intent (60' range); immune to disease; *cure disease* twice/week; heal 16 hp/day; S 16 (18/00 with *gauntlets of ogre power*), D 12, C 15, I 14, W 17, Ch 18; ML 18; *plate mail +3, Illuminus* (*two-handed sword +2, +4 vs. undead*), *gauntlets of ogre power.*

There are 12 watchers at Iniarv's Tower, including two 11th-level priests (Balathel and Gharvan), three 9th-level priests (Metedes, Arathylar, and Hendran), three 7th-level priests (Lorelle, Amilie, and Fernastus) and four 5th-level priests (Jarain, Daunzra, Olothyr and Rurumil). In addition to a full complement of healing spells, these lawful neutral priests carry various curative magics in the form of potions, scrolls and other items they keep under guard. For more information on the watchers of Helm and their magic, consult the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Adventures* hardbound book or the *Faiths & Avatars* accessory.

In addition to the priests, Sir Justin has a dozen 4th-level fighters wearing plate mail and carrying *shields +1, long swords +1* and short bows with quivers of magical arrows (all provided by Sir Justin). These guards are stationed at the base camp to protect the watchers and guard the camp against attacks from the Mere.

from the misfire rule except rods, scrolls, staves, and wands, which are susceptible to misfires.

If used in a non-combat situation, there is a 50% chance that a misfired spell hits a stray normal-sized arachnid, insect, or myriapod, producing results not unlike those of the *giant insect* spell (save that it affects not just insects but other creepy-crawlies as well). These monstrosities (see "Spell Misfire Results" sidebar) can not be controlled by the spellcaster; rather, they attack him and his cohorts immediately.

Attempts to cast magic within a sanitized area such as an *Otiluke's resilient sphere* or an *anti-animal shell* work so far as the spellcaster is temporarily safeguarded—but the miscast magic still goes somewhere, usually to create a monster in an adjacent room or area.

Wolfhill Estate

Today, Wolfhill House lurks just above the Mere's grasp. A weedy, marshy carriage trail leading from the High Road still provides the safest ingress to the estate. The House itself is the apotheosis of grandeur: a symmetrical, solid-brick edifice overgrown by patches of enormous briar, with gentle gables and a wide, column-supported entranceway. Yet decay is evident everywhere: many of the windows have been shattered by the intruding tendrils of swamp creepers, the House's rear acreage has been swallowed by the Mere, and a gaping hole has been cut in the eastern part of the roof by a hive of giant wasps infesting the attic. Insects and arachnids of gargantuan proportions roam the grounds, having long exterminated those weaker mammalian lifeforms that might otherwise inhabit their natural niches within the hill's ecosystem.

Save for the four outdoor areas detailed below and a large ship's anchor resting in the center of the front lawn, the exterior of Wolfhill House is unremarkable, although there is a 5% chance per turn that the PCs are attacked by either a pair of giant ants (members of the same hive as those encountered in area **1**) or a giant wasp from area **26**. Also, should the PCs become too sedentary or go bushwhacking into the mere, the DM might wish to use one or more of the giant bugs from the "Spell Misfire Results" sidebar.

Spell Misfire Results

Roll 1d6 for each misfired spell.

1. Bombardier beetle: INT non-; AL N; AC 4; MV 9; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d6; SA acid cloud; SZ S (4' long); ML 13; XP 120; *MM*/18 (Beetle, giant).

There is a 50% chance/round that the beetle will fire an 8'-diameter, spherical acid cloud for 3d4 damage. The sound caused by this attack has a 20% chance of stunning any hearing creature within 15 feet for 2d4 rounds and a 20% chance of deafening any unstunned creature for 2d6 rounds. The beetle can use its bombardier attack every third round but no more than twice per day.

2. Cave cricket: INT animal; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, hop 3; HD 1+3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SD chirping; SZ S (3' long); ML 3; XP 15; *MM*/204 (Insect).

Approaching within 20 feet causes the cricket to begin chirping, drowning out speech, preventing spellcasting, and attracting any monsters within 90 feet.

3. Fly, giant bluebottle: INT non-; AL N; AC 6; MV 9, Fl 30 (D); HD 3; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA bitten victim has 10% chance of contracting a disease; SD can land, bite, and jump away in a single round if it wins initiative; SZ M (6' long); ML 6; XP 65; *MM*/204 (insect).

4. Megalo-centipede: INT animal; AL N; AC 5; MV 18; HD 3; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d3; SA poisonous bite (save or die; 2d4 hp damage if save is successful); SZ M (5' long); ML 10; XP 175; *MM*/42 (centipede).

5. Spider, huge: INT animal; AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 2+2; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA leap 30' (victims suffer –6 to surprise roll); poisonous bite (save at +1 or sustain 15 hp damage, or no damage if the save is successful); SZ M (6' diameter); ML 8; XP 270; *MM*/326–327.

6. Tick, giant: INT non-; AL N; AC 3; MV 3; HD 3; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA blood drain; SZ S (3' diameter); ML 10; XP 65; *MM*/204 (insect).

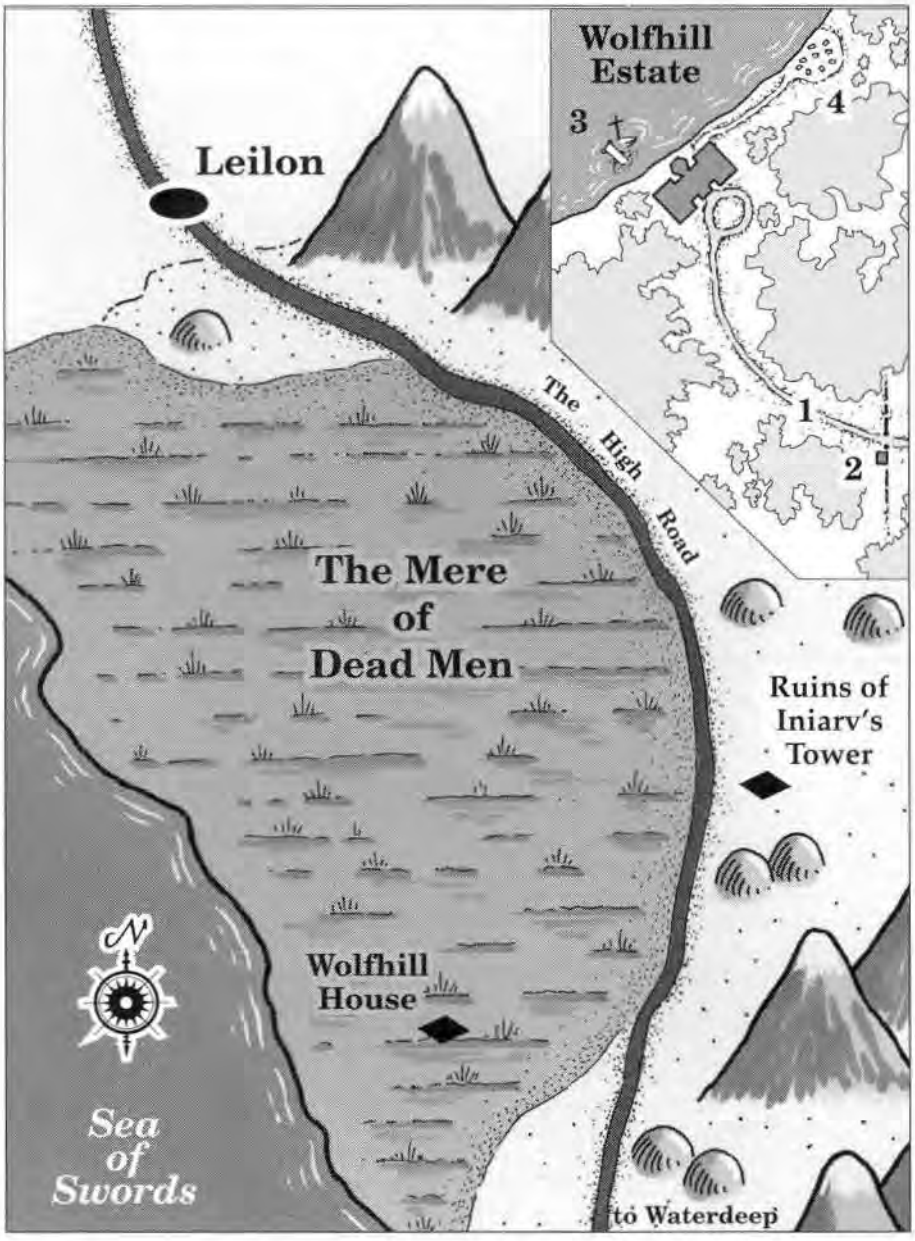
After a successful hit, the tick continues to drain blood for 1d6 damage per round until the amount drained equals its own hp total; afterwards, it detaches. A bitten victim has a 50% chance of contracting a fatal disease (death in 2d4 days) unless healed by *cure disease*.

1. Wolfhill Way. This unpaved thoroughfare runs due east-west, connecting the Wolfhill estate to the High Road. Both sides of the track have been consumed by the Mere's waters, but the PCs can travel single-file along an embankment hump between the ruts carved by wheels of carriages past. The landscape surrounding the way is flat, buggy, and monotonous, though the ground becomes drier and more foliated the closer one approaches Wolfhill House. The party notices that the marsh reeds reach soaring heights a quarter mile from the estate.

2. Gatehouse. A square, single-story building adjacent to a collapsed stable. The front door—which is rent and split as if by some powerful force—allows the only easy entrance. Investigating PCs find the windows and back door clumsily barricaded from within. The interior is empty as all available furniture was torn apart to block off the openings.

Giant worker ants crawl over the whole of the gatehouse, combing it for tidbits to ferry back to their nest. Most are occupied with flaying the meat off a twisted humanoid cadaver inside the building. PCs who make a successful Intelligence check at –4 can determine that the creature is not human and that the cause of death was strangulation. The remains are those of a histachii who fled the cellars beneath Wolfhill House before it could be sacrificed. (See "The Yuan-ti Laboratory.") The clone pursued its quarry to the coach house, broke through the histachii's meager defenses, and slew it.

Giant ants (20): INT non-; AL N; AC 3; MV 18; HD 2; hp 8 each; THAC0 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SZ S (2' long); ML 9; XP 35; *MM*/204 (Insect).



3. Estuary. Wolfhill House overlooks an estuary that winds its way to the Sea of Swords. The estuary has widened since the days of Hezekiel Wolf and now laps at the House's back stairs. A half-submerged dock some distance from dry land shows where the original shoreline was, and all that remains abovewater of Wolf's 21' sloop is its prow and mast.

The waters of the river teem with giant leeches that swarm upon anyone who braves its saline depths.

Giant leeches (16): INT non-; AL N; AC 9; MV 3, Sw 3; HD 2; hp 14 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA drains 2 hp/round after first successful attack (victim has 50% chance of contracting disease fatal in 1d4+1 weeks unless cured); SZ S (3' long); ML 7; XP 120; *MM*/219.

4. Cemetery. Accessible only by a small track leading through the colossal willows and grasses of the hill, this small mound of earth is the final resting place of Hezekiel Wolf's wife Rebekah, their daughter Melantha, and many of the servants who died while in the family's employ.

Wolfhill House

Although Wolfhill House has long had a reputation as being haunted, the fact is that no undead stalks its corridors. Rather, the scrambled tales told by erstwhile robbers of poltergeists and animated suits of armor are to be blamed on the tribe of jermlaine infesting the spaces between Wolfhill's walls. Descendants of a few individuals brought back by Hezekiel Wolf on one of his journeys, the jermlaine—who are immune to the hill's eugenic enlarging aura due to their magic resistance—like to spice up their regular diet of giant-insect meat. To this end, they have strung numerous traps and pitfalls throughout the manor in the hopes of picking off any wandering adventurers. They refuse to show themselves in any direct confrontation except for the ambush detailed in area **7**—and it is for that reason that the PCs might believe they are up against an invisible or otherwise supernatural opponent. In fact, failing to slay them in the ambush, the PCs must either force a confrontation with the jinxkin (by shrinking themselves and pursuing the creatures into the walls, for example) or burn Wolfhill House to its foundation if they wish to destroy the pests once and for all.

The party is peppered from the ceiling by the jermlaines' darts (see area **7**) should they attempt to camp or sleep anywhere within the House except the menagerie (area **9**).

Only thieves making a successful Detect Noise check or those with magically or psionically augmented hearing can perceive the twittering of the merry little sadists as they scamper between the walls and floorboards of the House. The jermlaine move freely between the first and second floors but avoid both the basement and the attic. They are terrified of the giant elder cobra and the hive of giant wasps living in those areas.

PCs can enter the House through any of its doors or windows, many of which are either ajar or broken. The interior overflows with antebellum splendor; chipped friezes and gold-painted cherubim decorate every room. Most ceilings are 12' high.

5. Ballroom. Three steps lead down from the massive brass doors of

the manor's front entrance to the parquet floor of what was once a grand dancing hall. Now, however, it edges are strewn with leaves and brambles, while the only reveler left to admire the room's crystal chandelier is the giant horsefly lying deceased beneath it. Two mahogany staircases—their newel posts carved into mermaids—sweep upwards to merge into a balcony arching over a set of glass double doors on the far wall.

The bronze statue of a storm-soaked mariner tightly gripping a ship's wheel stands in the west corner under the shadow of a staircase. One of the spokes on the wheel is actually a secret lever which, when deployed, shifts the statue aside to reveal a ladder disappearing into area **29**.

If the PCs escaped the ambush in area **7**, a group of five jermlaine (including one knight) shimmy onto the chandelier from a hole in the ceiling and proceed to bombard the party with a *wand of magic missiles* (20 charges). The jermlaine are well hidden by the multifarious crystals of the chandelier, and their vantage point gives them a 360° arc of fire.

6. Valet's Closet. A long table with numerous stools takes up most of the room, while coat pegs line the southeastern wall. At an opportune time, the jermlaine remove one of the pegs to unleash a jet of fire at the PCs (THAC0 15). Anyone struck must save vs. breath weapon or suffer 4d6 hp damage; a successful save results in half-damage. The jermlaine, who use a jury-rigged bellows filled with incendiary oil for this attack, have resources enough to attempt it only once.

7. Smoking Room. Many of the lush Oriental carpets and overstuffed chairs have either rotted or burst from the humidity, though a tarnished silver humidor worth 900 gp can be found among the ruins of a table, and an exquisite meerschaum pipe shaped to resemble a bearded sea captain rests by itself in a rack upon a small étagère. For warriors, smoking the pipe provides results equal to quaffing a potion of *heroism*.

Unless the doors have been wedged open by the PCs, the jermlaine shut and lock both once the entire party has entered the room (Open Doors check required to reopen them). Another jermlaine then activates an *eversmoking bottle* beneath the floorboards, filling the room with smoke and completely obscuring vision within 1 round (–4 penalty to attack rolls). The entire jermlaine army (which is accustomed to fighting in the smoke and suffers no attack roll penalty) swarms upon the PCs with the intent of beating them into subdual. Use the overbearing rules from the *DMG*; a group of jermlaine attacking a PC fights at –8 due to their size, but they gain +1 to their attack for every individual in the group beyond the first.

Even while fighting at close quarters, it is difficult for the PCs to see the jermlaine clearly without magical means. The DM should describe their assailants as dim, smoky humanoids slightly smaller than a human infant. The jermlaine immediately break off their siege should the tide turn against them.

If all of the PCs are knocked unconscious, they are stripped of their possessions, shorn of their hair (needed by the jermlaine to fashion ropes and tripwires), and trussed up (successful Bend Bars check or rope-use check needed to break free). The plumpest PC—preferably a halfling or dwarf—is the guest of honor at a special jermlaine feast; his friends are toted into the kitchen (area **10**) and stuffed down the trapdoor to await ingestion by the cellar's giant cobra in area **35**.

Jermlaine (30 clansmen, 5 knights, 1 elder): INT average; AL NE; AC 7 or 5 (knights); MV 15; HD ½; 3 hp each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (pike) or 1d2 (dart); SA swarm over victim and pummel him (cumulative 2% chance per blow of knocking victim unconscious); SD 75% undetectable; opponents suffer –5 to surprise rolls; MR save as 4-HD monsters; SZ T (1' tall); ML 12; XP 15, 35 (knight), 65 (elder); *MM*/176–177.

Five members of the jermlaine clan are knights wearing carapace armor (AC 5) made from giant ants; they coat their weapons with Type K poison (victim must save vs. poison or suffer an additional 5 hp damage). The jermlaine elder can rob the magic from a magical object if allowed to handle the item for 1d4 rounds.

8. Hall of Honor. Suits of scale and plate mail from the lands of Aglarond, Cormyr, and Calimshan flank guests as they walk to the doors of the dining room; behind them, coats-of-arms, banners, and pennants adorn the walls. The jermlaine have strung a tripwire down the center of the hall, causing one of the suits to fire its crossbow at the trespasser for 1d4+1 hp damage (THAC0 13). All armor is human sized, but the joints on the suits have rusted solid.

There are two 20'-square alcoves in this T-shaped chamber. The northwestern alcove is filled by an enormous stone head from the continent of Maztica. The mouth of the statue is hollow; any living creature crossing between the dining-room door and the head triggers a harmless beam of light to shoot from its mouth, illuminating (for 1d6 rounds) an onyx feline statue in the southeastern alcove. PCs making a Wisdom check upon first sighting the head realize that something is amiss and may jump clear of the beam. The Mulhorandi cat statue, filigreed with gold, is worth 5,000 gp, but it is attached to its pedestal by *sovereign glue*. The pedestal is likewise glued to the floor.

9. Menagerie. Various small cages hang from the ceiling and are arranged upon numerous shelves of this long room, where Hezekiel Wolf once kept a collection of exotic animals retrieved from distant ports-of-call. Now, most of the cells are empty with their doors swinging free or else contain only the moldered bones of their former occupants.

A large dollhouse takes up the whole of the northwestern wall. The house (which is not a replica of Wolfhill House) features multiple stories and dozens of rooms, and is completely furnished; the scale indicates that it is meant to accommodate humanoids about 1' tall. The dollhouse is open to view on one side, but a grill of closely-set iron bars covers the cutaway and all of the dollhouse's windows. A hole has been sliced through one of walls behind a miniature bureau, and by examining this it is easy to see that the walls actually consist of two layers of wood sandwiching a tight metal mesh.

Wolf confined jermlaine within the dollhouse. The present-day jermlaine

escaped by cutting through a wall. Superstition and folk tales about those dark days of imprisonment keep the modern-day jermlaine from ever entering the menagerie.

10. Kitchen. Reddish mold crusts every surface and tentacles of ivy stream through the smashed windows of what was once Wolfhill House's kitchen. A spiral staircase in leads to the second floor.

A trap door in the southern corner originally accessed the cellars beneath the House, but the industrious jermlaine have since demolished the connecting staircase and covered the portal with a thin sheet of camouflage. Anyone stepping upon the concealed pit falls to area **35** below, where they are caught in a hammock-like net. (See area **35** for details.)

Under the grate in the kitchen fireplace is a 3'-wide chute that also leads to area **35**. The opening is apparent to anyone who first moves the grate.

11. Dining Room. The maritime motif engendered by the assorted ships' figureheads spaced across the walls is complemented by the ocean-like swells of the hardwood floor, warped by wetness and age. Rivulets of water run between the figureheads, cracking and bubbling the plaster. A large piece of the ceiling has collapsed in the east corner, providing a glimpse into area **26C** above.

12. Parlor. Each of the two doors leading from the interior of the House into the parlor are locked and armed with spring-loaded needles; failure to properly disarm either injects the maladroit with Type A poison (15 hp damage). Each trap is active from both sides of the door.

This room is relatively dry. Various chairs, sofas, and coffee tables fill its space, while portraits of Hezekiel Wolf (a rough-looking man with long sideburns) and his wife Rebekah (a chestnut-haired beauty) hang upon the walls; each is worth 150 gp to historians. Broken glass doors leads out onto a 20' × 20' patio.

13. Powder Room. A mirror covers the entire southwestern wall; beneath this is a low counter with an ornate ceramic vase (worth 300 gp) at either end. A few velvet divans complete the room's furnishings.

Heavy drapes cover the windows along the southeastern wall. The jermlaine carefully cut and stitched the southernmost pair of curtains from a *cloak of smothering* (similar to the rug); anyone stepping within five feet of the window is caught in its folds and asphyxiated to death in 6 rounds unless he makes a successful Strength check at –4. Each round thereafter, the victim can make an additional attempt at greater penalty (–5 in the second round, –6 in the third, and so forth). The victim is held too tightly to use his weapons, but others may assist him. The drapes can withstand 25 hp damage before shredding (AC 10) but suffer only half-damage from edged weapons (the victim inside suffers the other half) and are totally impervious to bludgeoning attacks (victim suffers full damage).

14. Workshop. This workshop is strangely devoid of tools and materials. A set of barred double-doors lead out to the northwest lawn, while a broad stairwell takes PCs down to area **30**.

15. Museum. Torchlight reflects off the glass eyes of carnivorous apes, elk, tigers, and even stranger examples of taxidermy standing in niches within this dark chamber. The animals are arranged to appear threatening, and each bellows rage before a background painted to resemble its natural habitat. Set into one of these dioramas is a secret panel hiding a compartment containing a scroll inscribed with the *rope trick* spell.

A stuffed bull elephant stands triumphantly by itself on a 5'-high pedestal at the museum's center. Climbing onto the pedestal activates a tripwire, causing musk gas to spew from the elephant's trunk. Everyone in the room must make a successful Constitution check or vomit uncontrollably, reducing his or her Strength by half (rounded up) for 1d4 hours.

16. Library. Its doors are bound in leather and thousands of atlases, charts, gazetteers, and journals overspread its walls. Two spiral staircases lead upward to a balcony along the perimeter of the room.

The five bookshelves along the southeastern wall are balanced so that they collapse upon victims with just the slightest push from the jermlaine hiding in the walls behind them. Anyone standing within 10 feet of the heavy oak shelves is allowed a Dexterity check at –2 to leap away; otherwise, the victim suffers 1d10 hp of crushing damage.

Though rot and decay has eaten much of the library's resources, a treasury of books pertaining to boating, naval architecture, and navigation still remains. Anyone spending at least two weeks studying here and then crewing on a boat for another week automatically gains the seamanship proficiency (assuming that the character has a free slot).

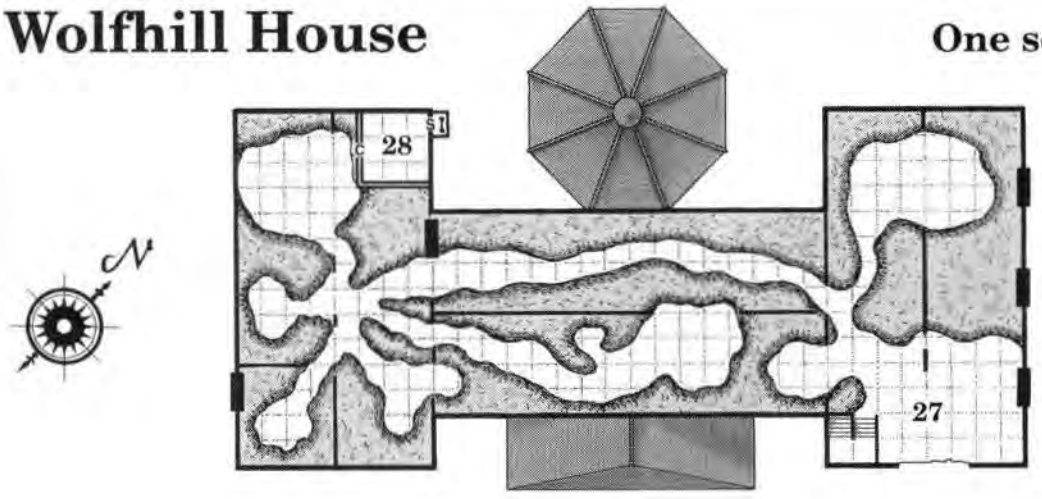
17. Conservatory. Leaded glass panels arranged to create a spacious octagonal greenhouse rise up to a roof three stories above. Two doors lead out onto the grounds, though monstrous creepers have already burst their way through portions of the glass. Garden beds of giant flowers and swollen vegetables spill onto the pavement, while a trickle of soupy water winds its way through the soft moss carpeting the floor.

The conservatory is dominated by the 12'-tall soapstone statue centered against the northwestern wall. The totem depicts a naked human woman with the head and claws of a lobster. PCs with the religion proficiency or having prior experience with the kuo-toa recognize the effigy as the Sea Mother, Blibdoolpoolp (another one of Hezekiel's odd trophies). It radiates divination magic via a permanent *Nystul's magical aura* but is otherwise unremarkable.

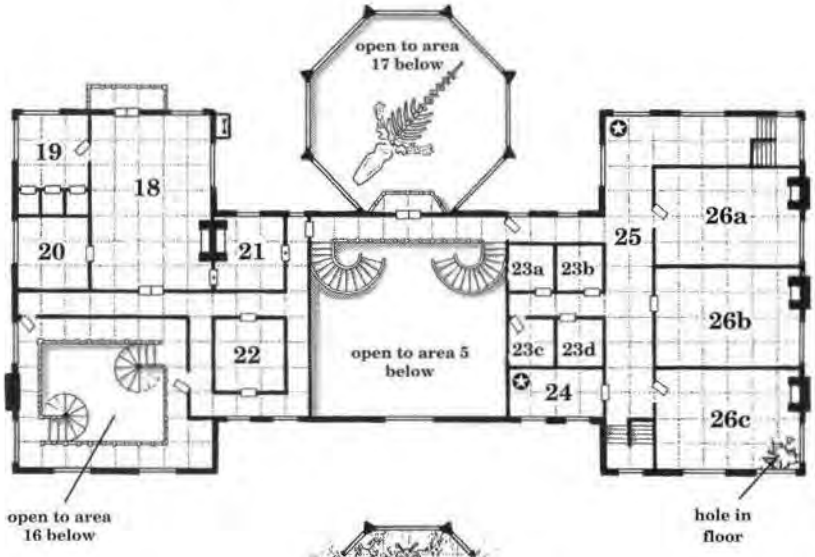
Suspended from thick cables overhead is the complete skeleton of an adult sperm whale. The beast hangs with its tail pointing due north, and thus its left flank faces the balcony above area **5**. It can only be reached by swinging or levitating to it. On the cusp of one of the whale's teeth the jermlaine have placed a *ring of chameleon power*, the sparkling glint of which can be easily seen by PCs on the ground floor. The whale's jaw is spring-rigged to snap shut for 4d4 hp damage if the ring is removed or if the trap is improperly disarmed.

Wolfhill House

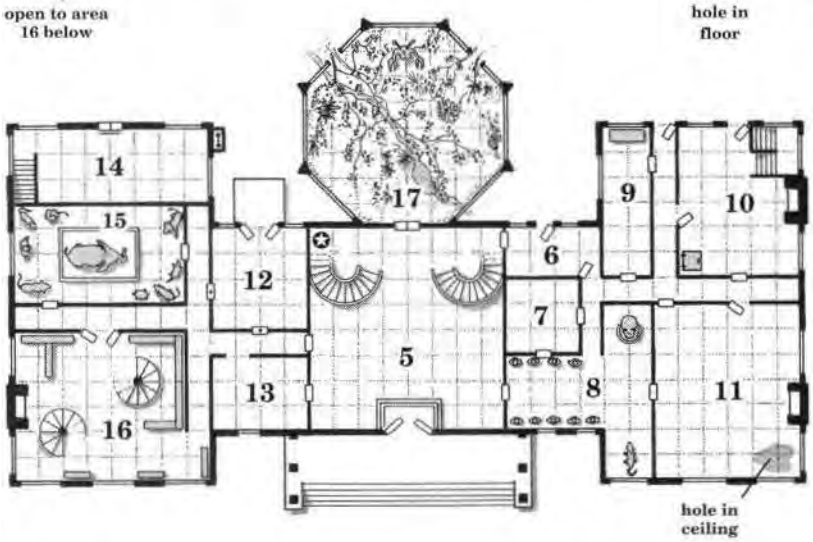
One square = 5 feet



Third Floor



Second Floor



First Floor

18. Master Bedroom. Unless they look up toward the ceiling to see the net hanging there, the PCs might wander aimlessly into this room after finding no tripwires or other dead giveaways. If so, the jermlaine drop the net upon the PCs; simultaneously, the clan releases a pack of five large scorpions, which scuttle from the boudoir (area **19**) to attack the PCs one round later. While caught in the net, all characters make attacks at –6 until they cut themselves free with 40 hp of cumulative slashing damage. All attacks automatically hit the net, but only daggers, knives, and similarly short-bladed weapons can be wielded within its confines.

Large scorpions (5): INT non-; AL N; AC 5; MV 9; HD 2+2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1 (stinger); SA stung victims must save vs. poison at +2 or suffer an additional 15 hp damage; SZ S (2' long); ML 8; XP 175; *MM*/309.

The bedroom features much of what one would expect of a wealthy mariner's sleeping quarters: a monumental sleigh bed, numerous cedar wardrobes and brass-fixtured dressers, a brick fireplace, and seascapes upon the walls. All of these things, however, are worthless due to the damage wrought by the Mere's sticky effluvium.

The small veranda outside is accessed via a set of glass doors.

19. Boudoir. The once-perfumed air here has turned stuffy and sour, and closets along the southeastern wall hold the rotting remnants of many evening gowns. A cabriole-legged bathtub stands in one corner. Perfume vials cover a table abutting a mirror. Hidden among the fragrances are two potions of *extra healing*. Additionally, a silk-quilted jewelry box contains 800 gp of miscellaneous jewelry; within the box's secret compartment lies a *periapt of proof against poison*.

There are gaping rents in the seashell-mosaic floor of this room. It is from these holes that the scorpion assassins clamber forth during the ambush described above.

20. Baby's Room. Once a walk-in closet, this chamber was converted to be the bedroom of the Wolfs' unborn child. Its size is exaggerated by the small furnishings dotted about: a dusty cradle, a highchair, and a crumbled playpen. More alarming is the single lit candle situated in the center of the room—a simple ploy on the jermlaine's part to conjure ghostly thoughts in the minds of the PCs.

21. Study. Both doors to the study are locked and, to a thief, apparently boobytrapped. As with the candle above, the traps are nothing more than dummy mechanisms installed by the malicious jermlaine to provoke anxiety in the PCs.

Bookshelves and comfortable reading chairs fill the room. Under a window by the fireplace is a large rolltop desk, and seated at the desk is a half-disintegrated skeleton. All but a few scraps of fabric have melted away from the bones, but an inscription along the inside of the skeleton's gold wedding band (worth 10 gp) reads, "To Zeke. All my love, Bek."

Hezekiel died of natural causes almost 200 years ago while writing at his desk. The rotting leaves of his journal are still spread out before him (see adjacent handout). PCs who bury Wolf gain 200 XP, but they receive nothing if they keep his wedding ring.

22. Playroom. This small room was converted into a child's playroom during Rebekah's pregnancy. It is filled with lifelike dolls (many of them about 1' tall) and other toys.

23A–D. Servant's Quarters. There is little of interest in these small, clammy apartments.

24. Guest Bath. Water splashes in a steady trickle from the ceiling to an overflowing bathing basin. From there, it pours to the floor and toward the walls beyond.

In the western corner of the room is a fantastically detailed statue, retrieved by Wolf from a weird "isle of stone" somewhere in the Trackless Sea. It portrays an armored warrior posed for battle; in reality, it is a paladin who was shipwrecked on a basilisk's island and fell victim to its petrifying gaze. If the *stone to flesh* scroll found in area **25** is cast upon him, the paladin, in repayment for his freedom, gladly joins the party for the rest of the adventure.

Gorman: AL LG; AC 4; MV 8; P3; hp 18; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+1 (claymore) or 1d4 (dagger); SD *detect evil* within 60 feet; +2 to all saving throws; immune to disease and can *cure disease* once/week; can heal 6 hp once/day; 10'-radius aura of protection (summoned and evil beings attack at –1); turns undead as 1st-level cleric; S 12, D 10, C 11, I 9, W 15, Ch 17; ML 14; *claymore +1*, dagger, splint mail, open-face helmet.

25. Gallery. Rows of paintings depicting nautical scenes wallpaper this wide corridor. The artistry is passable; each painting can fetch 75 gp unframed, and there are 18 in all. One canvas is actually the back a scroll inscribed with the 6th-level wizard spell *stone to flesh*.

26A–C. Guest Suites. Each suite comes equipped with mildewed furnishings and a private bath. The floor in area **26C** has been water damaged due to the giant wasps' cavity in the roof above; anyone walking across it has a cumulative 20% chance per level of encumbrance (20% for unencumbered characters, 40% for lightly encumbered, etc.) of plummeting into the dining room (area **11**) below for 2d6 hp damage. To entice visitors to enter, the jermlaine have tacked one of Rebekah Wolf's gold-plated necklaces (worth 225 gp) over the fireplace along the northeastern wall.

27. Attic. Giant wasps cut their way through the roof to lair within the attic. Whatever belongings Wolf kept here have long since been masticated by the wasps into the fibrous material that covers wall, floor, and ceiling. Many of the supporting beams have been gnawed away, causing the roof to sag precariously.

Only 1d4 wasps are present when the party arrives in this area, but an additional 1d4 swoop in every other round (until all 11 are accounted for) from the gaping hole in the southeastern wall to attack the intruders. Luckily, the close quarters prevent the wasps from taking flight while inside the attic.

Giant wasps (11): INT non-; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, Fl 21 (B); HD 4; hp 14 each; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/1d4 (sting); SA stung victims must save vs. poison or suffer an additional 5d6

damage and 2d6 hours of paralysis; SZ M (6' long); ML 10; XP 420; *MM*/204–205 (insect).

28. Storeroom. The wasps were unable to penetrate the stone walls and iron-banded door of this room, concealed by the regurgitated wood pulp forming the walls of the wasps' hive. The interior of the room is bare save for a scattering of chairs and four locked trunks, one of which is empty. Another contains a large collapsed tent (25 gp) and 12 wooden stakes. The third—which, in addition to being locked, is equipped with a spring-needle inflicting 1 hp damage—contains a set of 64 tiny ivory fetishes, carved to resemble leering goblins (worth 5 gp each), and 3 cubes of *incense of meditation*.

The last trunk contains a series of stone plates covered in cuneiform. *Comprehend languages* or a successful Read Languages check reveals the tablets to be a primitive witch doctor's spellbook that somehow fell into Wolf's hands. The tablets list spells to be chosen randomly or by the DM.

A secret door in the northern corner uncovers a narrow passage inside the exterior wall of the manor. An iron ladder bolted to the side of the tunnel disappears into the inky blackness below, leading to area **34**. Dwarves making a successful detect new construction check recognize that the passage is not part of the House's original design. This passage, which is the most direct route to the yuan-ti base beneath Wolfhill House, was recently used by Esau Enoch and his comrades. The group used their stealth abilities to sneak through the hive and into the storeroom, leaving the wasps to "repaper" the rent cut over the storeroom door.

The Cellars

Unless otherwise stated, all ceilings in the cellars are 10' high.

29. Treasury. This 20' × 20' chamber is empty save for a battered sea chest against the wall; it is locked but not trapped. Inside are Hezekiel Wolf's most prized material possessions: a human-sized suit of *leather armor +2*, a *short sword +2*, and a pair of *gloves of missile snaring*. A wooden ladder leads up to area **5**.

Tarsakh 22. Great news! Rebekah is pregnant at last! I cannot believe our fortune. I ordered Petrov to ride to Waterdeep and inform our friends. There are ten thousand things that must be done—the list goes on and on. This is a wondrous day!

Greengrass. Found Petrov today. Something had dragged far out into the marsh. Must have been a spider, though it was difficult to tell at first—a giant hornet had since feasted on the remains. Still, the marks at the base of his skull were distinguishable enough. It had waited in the brush near the stable as he went for his horse, seized him from behind, paralyzed him. Just like the others.

Kythorn 6. Strange thing: the little manikins escaped their dollhouse. Cut a hole right through the planks and the grill between. Nasty little creatures. With luck, they're far into the swamp where the beasts can get them. It was foolish of me to bring them back. I thought that they would delight Rebekah, entertain her, and perhaps even take the place of a baby. I wanted to give her something to assuage the loneliness of her days. Instead, the tiny devils inspired revulsion with their petulant sulking and evil glances.

Marpenoth 14. Rebekah is very ill. The midwife says that the child is too big, that her belly cannot hold it. She is bedridden and in great discomfort. I stay by her side as much as possible these days, leaving only when I must attend to some business or other. Truth be known, I have already let some things slip, especially certain matters of maintenance. Giorgi has taken quarters here in the manor, having abandoned the gatehouse after what happened to Petrov. I promised him that I would exterminate the spiders and reinforce the shutters and doors, but I have not done so yet.

Feast of the Moon. Have not been able to write for some weeks. Rebekah is gone. The child, too. It was as the midwife said: the baby was too large. My dear Rebekah went into a labor a full month early. The midwife tried her best—nothing worked. As for the child, Melantha, she was as large as a girl who has already seen her first winter. I have buried both.

Nightal ?. The last of my servants left today: the cook and the chambermaid. I am alone now, alone with my collections and whatever ghosts have decided to haunt this house. I cannot sell it—the stories of Hezekiel Wolf and his cursed home will be bound into penny dreadfuls and sold on every street corner. And thus I might as well have dumped all of my riches into the sea long ago and have done with it. Certainly fewer would have suffered.

There is nothing to do but board up the windows and the doors to keep them out until the day comes when they pull the manor down around me. There is plenty of food in the stores below. I shall not die of starvation.

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30. Coal Cellar. A stack of coal is piled in the northern corner and the three yawning archways egressing to broad corridors. Amidst a forest of supporting pillars, the slow but constant drip of water falling from ceiling to puddled floor breaks the otherwise deathly silence.

31A–B. Crate & Barrel. These two storerooms are full of household wares. Area **31A** is stacked with unmarked crates, many of which contain statuary, ceramics, exotic seeds, and the like. One crate in particular has burst asunder; among the wooden fragments are chips from a gargantuan egg. Rangers or druids realize the eggshell to be reptilian in nature; it is that of the giant cobra in area **40**. Area **31B**, meanwhile, holds numerous casks and barrels of vinegar, rum, and rancid foodstuffs.

32. Chain Garden. Hundreds of chains—big and small, long and short—hang from hooks in the ceiling. Rivulets of water cascade down their lengths to feed the 1'-high layer of standing water covering this room's floor. Many of the iron chains are rusty, but others forged of various alloys are not. The PCs can easily find a chain of the proper gauge, length, and strength to operate the winch in area **40**.

33. Wine Cellar. Rack upon rack of wine bottles are riveted to the four walls of this chamber, though most of their treasures have soured or spilled. A thorough search of the racks unveils a five bottles of well-preserved wine, worth 100 gp apiece. Additionally, another bottle contains not wine but a painstaking miniature replica of a schooner. If the bottle is ever broken and the ship is placed upon a body of water, the effects of the clerical spell *lower water* cast at 10th level result. The tiny ship crumbles after its magic is spent.

34. Shaft. This access tunnel connects the secret ladder linking area **28** with area **36**. PCs can easily tell from the earthen walls and supporting timbers that the shaft is of recent construction, made by the yuan-ti as a secret entrance to their base. Footprints in the muddy floor lead down the passage toward area **37**.

35. Root Cellar. Once a storage space for the kitchen, this chamber has since been converted into a larder for the giant cobra in area **40**. The only easy exit is the chute in the ceiling leading to area **10**. The arches to the southwest and northeast have been solidly bricked up, and a portcullis cuts off escape to the northwest; the portcullis is raised by a rope and locking lever at the foot of the stairs beyond in area **36**.

The jermlaine have strung one of Hezekiel Wolf's old fishing nets between the four central pillars of the room, catching PCs who trip through the trap door in area **10** above. The fall is harmless, but two full rounds are needed for a PC to free himself. The real danger lies in the numerous pots, pans, silverware, and china shards tied to the net by the jermlaine, which set off an ungodly racket while anyone is in the net. The ruckus summons the giant elder cobra in area **40**; it arrives in two rounds. If everyone is still entangled in the net, the cobra simply slithers into the chamber and begins striking freely. The cobra attempts to mesmerize PCs who have escaped the net.

To raise the portcullis, the cobra simply pulls on the rope with its mouth before flicking the locking lever with its tail.

36. Pump Room. The centerpiece of this chamber is a large capstan, which operates a corkscrew well reaching deep into the loam beneath the estate. Operating the capstan flushes water from the well into the chute of area **37**. The entrance to a walkway paralleling the channel has been walled over; again, this construction is recent.

A rope and locking lever at the foot of the southeastern stairs operates the portcullis sealing off area **35**. An 18 Strength, combined or alone, is required to pull the rope.

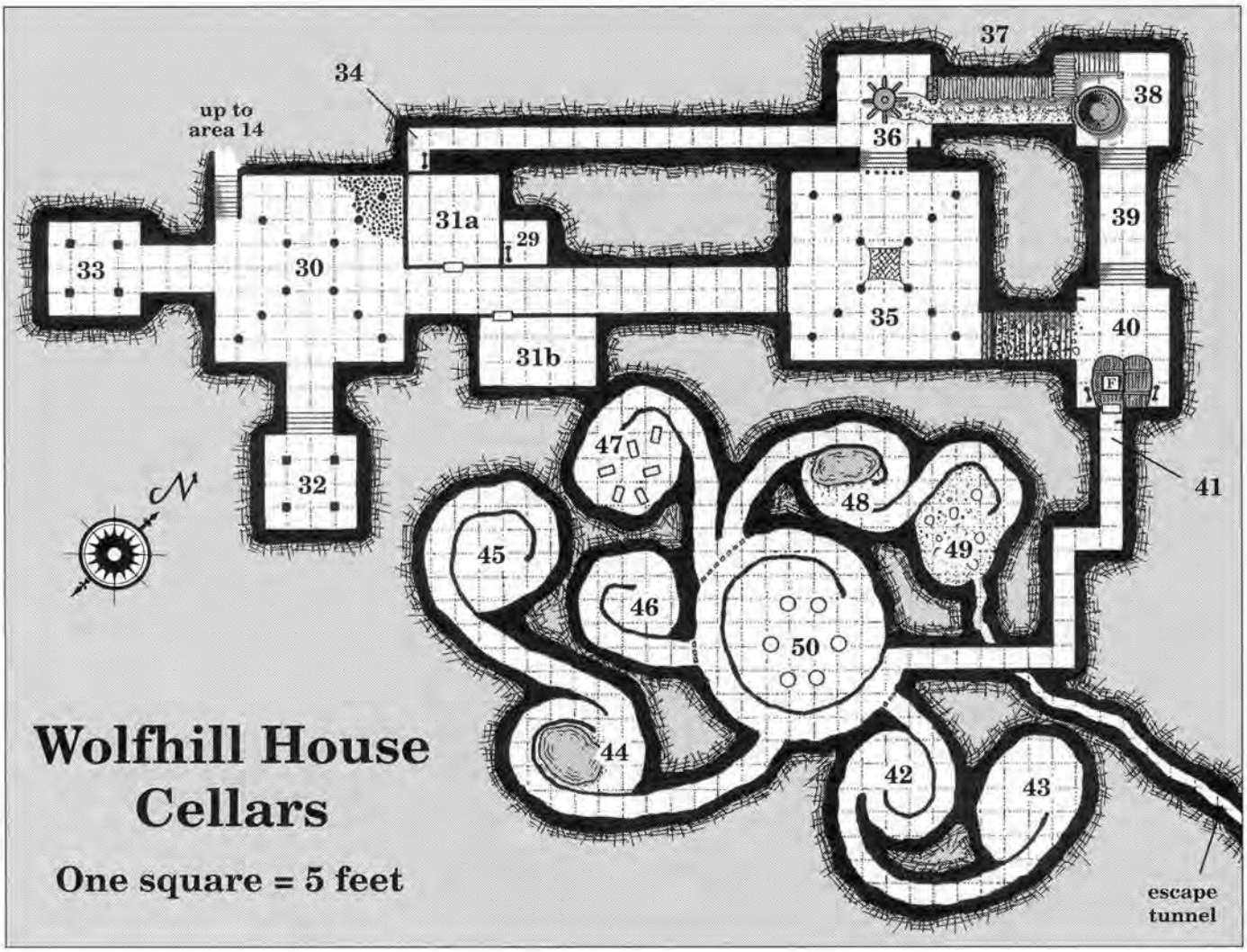
A trail of muddy footsteps leads from area **34** to area **37**. Sharp-nosed PCs may also notice the faint odor of cigar smoke.

37. Channel. This dry, V-shaped chute slopes from area **36** down to area **38**, descending a total of 15 vertical feet from point to point. A 10'-wide catwalk runs above the channel's northwestern edge. The smell of cigar smoke is very thick throughout the area.

As soon as the party enters this area, they are ambushed from the ledge above by Esau Enoch and his lackeys, who have been patiently waiting for the PCs to arrive ever since the jermlaine—whose favors have been bought with gifts of magic items—first reported the party's arrival at the estate. Enoch uses his *cause fear* ability while his lieutenant Shan Hsi and three megalomen (muscular 7'-tall humans) unleash their various missile weapons. Once these are exhausted, the megalomen engage in hand-to-hand combat while the other two observe. At the first sign of serious resistance, Enoch and Shan Hsi flee the battle and run to area **40**. There, they enter the secret base and reset the casks to foil pursuit. As Enoch wants to make good on his escape (and he needs the ruse to appear as authentic as possible), the megaloman warriors have orders to fight until slain. Enoch is not averse to creating as many casualties among their ranks as he can—he only needs one PC to report his "death."

Enoch has established this ambush for the sole purpose of being identified by the party. That way, when he releases his clone later in the adventure, Enoch hopes that the PCs mistake the clone for him, either taking it into custody or killing it before their departure from the estate. Only by removing scrutiny from Wolfhill House will Enoch redeem himself in the eyes of Sissiska, his yuan-ti superior. Since his unannounced return to Wolfhill, Enoch has spent most of his time skulking outside of the base away from his master's black looks, preparing his trap and hoping for a chance to return to Sissiska's good graces.

Esau Enoch (pureblood yuan-ti thief): AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; T10; hp 36; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4+1/1d4+1 (dagger) or 1d3/1d3 (darts) or by spell; SA spells, backstab for quadruple damage (+4 to hit; target's shield and Dexterity bonuses are negated); SD contortion; S 15, D 16, C 14, I 17, W 11, Ch 13; MR 20%; ML 14; XP 8,000; *MM*/369; PP 45%, OL 60%, F/RT 40%, MS 75%, HS 85%, DN 60%, CW 85%, RL 35%; *dagger of venom* (on natural 20, victim must save vs. poison or die), *ring of Myrkul*



(see "New Magical Item" sidebar on page 27), 10 darts, thieves' tools.

Spells (cast at 6th level, usable once/day): *cause fear; darkness 15' radius, snake charm; suggestion; neutralize poison, polymorph other, sticks to snakes.*

Esau Enoch appears as a lean-muscled human man with closely cropped hair; his yuan-ti parentage is evidenced outwardly in the piebald patches of browns and yellows mottling his skin. He disdains an excess of clothing, preferring to utilize the natural AC his inhuman blood engenders, and usually only wears trousers, boots, and a utilitarian baldric.

Like a snake unhinging its jaw to devour prey much larger than itself, Enoch can dislocate any joint within his body at will. He may make a Dexterity check once per round to escape bindings such as rope, handcuffs, *web* spells, and so forth; success indicates that Enoch frees himself. This ability is useless against a *wall of force*, a jail cell with closely-set bars, or any method of containment that prevents Enoch from at least wriggling his skull free.

Shan Hsi (human yakuza): AL LE; AC 9 (5 in combat); MV 12; T6; hp 21; THAC0 18; #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1d6/1d6 (fists) or 1d3 (knife) or by special maneuver; SA special kung-fu maneuvers; backstab for triple dmg (+4 to hit and target's shield and Dexterity bonuses are negated); S 11, D 15, C 10, I 14, W 9, Ch 10; ML 12; XP 975; PP 70%, OL 35%, F/RT 55%, MS 45%, HS 45%, DN 20%, CW 75%, RL 15%; five throwing knives, thieves' tools, box of cigars.

Shan Hsi is a born member of a Kara-Turan snake cult and worked for Esau Enoch when the latter operated a black-lotus smuggling operation years ago. Eventually, Shan Hsi left the Orient with Enoch once the network was exposed to authorities. Shan Hsi wears his hair long, and tattoos slither up each arm and across his back. He also has a penchant for smoking cigars, even while fighting.

When fighting, Shan Hsi has AC 5, and 2 attacks/round (Dmg 1d6/1d6). He may employ one of the following special maneuvers per round. The DM should declare aloud which maneuver (if any) Shan Hsi is using before beginning the attack roll.

❖ Choke Hold: If Shan Hsi successfully hits, the victim falls unconscious for 1d3 rounds at the end of the following round unless he breaks

free with a successful attack (at –2). Shan Hsi can take no other action while choking someone.

❖ Flying Kick: Shan Hsi needs at least 5 feet of running space to execute this move; if successful, he inflicts triple damage. Failure indicates that he must spend an extra round scrambling to his feet.

❖ Locking Block: If successful, Shan Hsi immobilizes his opponent's arms. The victim can break free with a successful to-hit roll (no damage); otherwise, Shan Hsi can continue to attack with his feet (+4 to hit) in consecutive rounds.

❖ Sidestep: Shan Hsi can anticipate and dodge an attack to negate half the damage if it lands; he can only use this ability six times per day.

First-generation megalomen (3): AL LE; AC 5; MV 12; F2; hp 14, 12, 8; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4+3 (bastard sword) or 1d6 (short bow); S 18/51 (+2/+3); SZ M (7' tall); ML 14; XP 65; chain mail, bastard sword, short bow, 10 flight arrows.

For more information about the megalomen and their origins, see "The Secret Lab" below.

38. Boiler Room. The V-chute empties into a colossal copper kettle. Originally, once the boiler's hatch was closed, its contents were heated; the steam vapor then collected along its conical lid and ran into the distillery pipes in area **39**, and, once cooled, into the casks of area **40**. In this manner, Hezekiel Wolf desalinized the Mere's water, producing fresh water for the household's consumption.

Salt cakes nearly every surface of this 30'-high room, the by-product of Wolf's process; huge lumps of the stuff have transformed the floor into a boulder field. Various tongs, scoops, and long-handled scrapers hang upon the walls. The boiler itself is in working order, though it hasn't been operated in two centuries. Investigating PCs notice a sliding tray at the kettle's base, in the center of which is a finger-thick cylinder. Wolf used a cursed *ring of heating metal* to power the boiler, but this item has since been removed by the yuan-ti and thrown into the pool in area **48**.

39. Distillery. Assorted pipes and spiraling tubes fill this chamber, held together by a latticework of rusted iron supports. Alchemists or those with the brewing NWP realize that several key pieces of the unit are missing; they were appropriated by the yuan-ti for their laboratory.

40. Keg Cellar. Casks, kegs, and barrels of all sizes rest against the sides of this chamber, but the two 20'-long, 10'-high wooden casks centered against the southeastern wall dominate the room. A wooden ladder rests against the side of each.

The two giant casks were the original repositories for the fresh water distilled by Hezekiel Wolf. Since Wolf's time, however, the casks have been converted by the yuan-ti to hide the entrance to their secret base.

The two casks rest on shifting plates cut from the stone floor by yuan-ti engineers, and they rise or fall according to a leverage mechanism buried underground. When activated, the mechanism raises one cask while simultaneously dropping the other in see-saw fashion. Gravity causes the higher cask's contents—a crystal-clear but acrid-smelling Type N poison (save vs. poison on contact or die in 1 round; successful save results in 25 hp damage)—to drain into the lower through a hinged steel pipe connecting the two. A hatch in the top of the rightmost cask allows ingress to its interior and access to a watertight door facing the wall. When the cask is raised—and thus empty—this door opens inward to reveal a second door in the wall behind the cask; this is the door into the yuan-ti base. When in the raised position, the thresholds of both doors are flush with one another.

The wooden casks are lined by riveted steel sheets, making them and the connecting pipe impenetrable to all but the most forceful of assaults. Both are bolted to their respective plates, which are locked in place by the lifting mechanism—neither can be pushed or pulled by hand. There is exactly 1" of space between the back of the casks and the wall, so only a diminutive or vaporous PC can enter the yuan-ti base without passing through the cask first.

The rightmost cask is currently lower than the left, and therefore brims with poison. It was reset by Esau Enoch and Shan Hsi after fleeing the ambush in area **37**; if both of those two were slain or captured, it has been lowered by a megaloman guard inside the base. Either way, the PCs must find a way to raise the cask and drain the poison if they wish to continue into the secret base.

The answer to this riddle lies in the vertically-aligned turnstile winch recessed within the western corner. This winch was installed by the yuan-ti; a chain once attached the winch to the system of pulleys and counterweights deep underground to operate the lifting/sinking action of the casks. The yuan-ti could afford to keep a megaloman positioned at an identical winch in area **41**, to raise the rightmost cask when commanded via telepathy by an arriving yuan-ti. With the megaloman in place, the yuan-ti saw no need for the winch in this chamber and decided to remove the chain, rendering it useless.

Of course, in order to function, all the winch needs is a solid chain of the right length and size, which can easily be found in area **32**. If PCs successfully reaffix a chain to the winch and the corresponding gear niched in the floor under the winch, they can use the winch to raise and lower the casks. A Dexterity check is required to loop the chain under the gear. Only one pair of hands can attempt to work the chain under the gear at a time. Once the chain is slung over the teeth of the winch and under those of the gear, the PCs should cinch the two ends of the chain closed. This action requires a successful Bend Bars roll.

The only thing impeding the PCs' progress is the elder giant cobra lairing in this room, made larger by the *enlarging* power of Wolfhill House. The serpent has lived for many years by feeding on giant insects and jermlaine. When the yuan-ti arrived a few years ago, they placated this serpent with numerous sacrifices of human slaves, thereby coercing it into its role as a guard.

The cobra, for its part, is amused by the yuan-ti and nothing more. It has no interest in them or their doings and is only concerned with eating, lying about, and dreaming its snaky dreams. It has so far allowed them to wall off its home—although, if it wished, it could squeeze up the 3'-wide chute to area **10**.

The cobra is currently coiled atop the two giant kegs. Upon encountering the party, the serpent's main priority is to mesmerize the PCs and bite them to death. While it maneuvers into position to attack, however, the cobra is very chatty and has much to say about the yuan-ti and their base. It is familiar with the megalomen and knows that "They are not born asss other thingsss are," but it has no concept of cloning. It also knows that there are several yuan-ti present inside the base.

If hurt badly, the cobra attempts to flee to area **35** and up the chute to the kitchen and freedom.

Elder giant cobra: INT low; AL N; AC 8; MV 12; HD 4; hp 19; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8; SA poison (save at –4 or die in 1d4 rounds; 1d10 hp damage and 1d6 rounds of paralysis if save is successful); can mesmerize for as long as the cobra concentrates plus an additional 2d6 rounds (victims are allowed save vs. paralysis to resist); SZ H (24' long); ML 16; XP 975; *MC Annual, Volume One*.

The Yuan-ti Laboratory

Upon orders from their leaders within the Cathedral of Emerald Scales, the yuan-ti have spread across the continent of Faerûn. Their goal: the eventual subjugation of all life to their will.

After initial forays into the Mere of Dead Men (conveniently located near one of the greatest metropolises in the Realms), the yuan-ti soon became aware of Wolfhill's *enlarging* dweomer. The yuan-ti, eon-wrapped in their mists and their mysteries, have long possessed knowledge of dark rites and evil ways, of the brewing of toxins, of the husbandry of humans, of the extraction of life to create new life. Yet never before had they had such cause to take advantage of it as they did now; there was nothing to be gained in raising armies of human slaves or clones, as even the weakest of the yuan-ti—the purebloods like Esau Enoch—are fiercer and stronger than normal men. But by cloning under Wolfhill's aura, the yuan-ti could grow a copy that was larger and stronger than the original. Their own magic resistance made duplicating oversized versions of themselves impossible, and trying to clone elves for their infravision or dwarves for their thick, stocky builds was likewise thwarted. Only humans represented a workable and worthwhile investment. These clones could then be indoctrinated from "birth" with yuan-ti propaganda and mind-control techniques, yielding giant slaves who surpassed their masters in sheer strength even while lacking the yuan-ti's innate magical abilities. Better still, by cloning the clones, the snake-men could manufacture bigger and bigger warriors.

The rest unfolded like clockwork. A laboratory was constructed, a supply network established. In addition to providing food and equipment, Esau Enoch furnished the raw material: kidnapped travelers from the High Road, whose bodies were used to make the first wave of "megalomen." After the yuan-ti had taken what they needed from their captives, the prisoners were forcibly converted into near-mindless histachii. For months, the clones gestated. Then, since no person and his clone can exist at the same time and remain sane, each histachii was sacrificed to its respective clone to preserve the latter's mind. Bands of megalomen sallied forth to abduct travelers, and more megalomen were created. Eventually, once the base was self-sufficient, most of the true yuan-ti left to dispense woe elsewhere.

The whole of the yuan-ti's cloning lore is catalogued in a manual on the subject. It was by using his high-level thief ability to read magical scrolls that Esau Enoch cloned himself (remember—the yuan-ti's magic resistance doesn't inhibit actual cloning, just the enlarging factor that the snake-men desire). As soon as the process was complete, he locked the result away (see area **45**); the clone's consciousness quickly broke under the pressure of two Enochs' existence and was left to wallow and gibber in its insanity.

Upon being routed from his outpost in Iniarv's Tower, Enoch returned to Wolfhill House and apprised his commander, Sissiska, of the situation. He convinced her that to extinguish any pursuit would simply encourage others to follow; what was needed was a gambit in which authorities could actually leave Wolfhill House believing that Enoch was dead and that the manor had no further secrets to divulge. In short, the yuan-ti were better off wielding their reptilian wiles if their operation was to remain unmolested.

To that end, the illusionist Domino—the only servant of Esau Enoch's other than Shan Hsi to escape the rout of Iniarv's Tower—has blanketed the base with illusions designed to make it appear as nothing more than an extension of the Wolfhill cellars. The PCs are allowed to explore the area at will in the hopes of satisfying their curiosity and reporting to Justin Melenikus that the House is, in fact, deserted. At some point, they are sure to encounter the Enoch clone, which the yuan-ti have released as a decoy. Meanwhile, the yuan-ti and their megalomen wait and observe from nearby seclusion, prepared to assail the PCs should the truth be unveiled.

41. Sentry Post. A full-time guard is usually stationed by this lever in the wall, which connects directly to the underground gearworks. Of course, these guards are currently in hiding per Esau Enoch's orders. The two casks can be shifted into either position with the lever, but an 18 Strength (solo or combined) is needed to operate it.

42. Barracks. A *phantasmal force* curtains the entrance to this corridor from the main ramp. Yet the unbroken wall seen by the PCs is not the reality: immediately behind the wall is the yuan-ti illusionist Domino, concentrating on maintaining the mirage.

The object of Domino's spell is to marshal the PCs away from the megaloman barracks and toward area **50**. If discovered, Domino immediately turns and runs into the barracks. As soon as the party enters, the eight megalomen standing to one side of the entranceway attack. Meanwhile, hearing the clamor, the four megalomen from area **43** jump the PCs from behind to seal off retreat. The two third-generation megalomen from area **46** arrive three rounds later. Neither Shan Hsi, Esau Enoch, nor Sissiska comes to the megalomen's assistance, as they feel themselves too important to risk their lives defending Domino and the disposable megalomen constructs.

Domino and the warriors attempt to beat the PCs into submission, either by killing them or seizing them to be cloned before histachii conversion. If captured, the party members are stripped of all gear and locked into the slave pens of area **45**.

If the PCs do not give chase to Domino, she and the megalomen patiently wait to see what the party does next; they have orders to assist others in the complex should the need arise.

The barracks themselves are nothing more than 10 wooden bunks atop a raised wooden floor (to ward off draftiness). Under each bunk is an unlocked chest, containing crudely-made megaloman-sized clothing, books, weapons, and various knickknacks.

Domino (pureblood yuan-ti illusionist): AL CE; AC 2; MV 12; M7; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 2; Dmg 1d3/1d3 (stiletto) or 1d6+3/1d6+3 (*darts of homing*); SA spells; spit every third round (victims must save vs. poison or be blinded as per the *cause blindness* spell); S 11, D 16, C 13, I 17, W 13, Ch 8; MR 20%; ML 14; XP 4,000; *MM*/369; stiletto (+2 to hit against plate, ring, chain, and all leather armor), three *darts of homing*.

Spells (cast at 6th level, usable once per day): *cause fear; darkness 15' radius, snake charm; suggestion; neutralize poison, polymorph other, sticks to snakes*.

Illusionist spells remaining: *phantasmal force, spook, ventriloquism; mirror image*.

Domino is appears as a tall, shadowy figure wearing hooded robes and gloves. The upper part of her face is concealed by a grotesque half-mask, which she wears whenever associating with non-yuan-ti. Removing her hood and mask reveals her to be hairless, having fine, diamond-shaped scales in substitution of human flesh.

In combat, Domino casts *mirror image* on herself, then *cause fear* and *spook* before engaging in melee.

Since the flight from Iniarv's Tower, Domino's faith in her mission has begun to waver; should she fail a morale check, she attempts to flee into the Mere in the hopes of losing herself among the masses of Waterdeep. She uses her *darkness 15' radius* and *ventriloquism* spells to throw off pursuit.

First-generation megalomen (5): AL LE; AC 6; MV 12; F2; hp 10 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (two-handed spear) +3 (Strength); S 18/51 (+2/+3); SZ M (7' tall); ML 14; XP 35; two-handed spear, scale mail.

The megalomen are designed to be the shock troops in the pro-yuan-ti wars foreseen by the abomination masters. Brainwashed since genesis with brutal conditioning, they are wholeheartedly acquiescent to the orders of any yuan-ti.

Second-generation megalomen (3): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F3; hp 20, 14, 12; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (scimitar) +6 (Strength); S 18/00 (+3/+6); SZ L (8' tall); ML 14; XP 65; scimitar, chain mail, medium shield.

These members of the "second generation" are clones made from first-generation megalomen and thus are stronger.

43. Barracks Annex. Four megalomen lurk here, either waiting for the PCs to enter or for the call to battle. Should the PCs walk into this room before exploring the main barracks, these four megalomen attack while the megalomen from area **42** move in from the rear. The megalomen from area **46** appear four rounds later.

In all physical respects, this chamber is identical to area **42**, save that three of the beds look unused and the chests under them are empty.

First-generation megalomen (4): AL LE; AC 7; MV 12; F2; hp 15 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (trident) +3 (Strength); S 18/51 (+2/+3); SZ M (7' tall); ML 14; XP 35; trident, leather armor, medium shield.

44. Pool. Most of the floor is taken up by a 5'-deep pool of tepid, scummy water. Rodent bones and patches of crumbly, mica-like material are scattered about the floor; the latter are large flakes of skin shed by the reptilian histachii who make this room their den.

In fact, the six histachii currently active in the complex are present in the room, cowering to one side under the cover of Domino's *invisibility 10' radius*. Sissiska gave them strict orders to remain still and make no sound while the PCs explore the base, and as the histachii fear her above all things, they endeavor to fulfill her wishes. If exposed, they defend themselves. Unlike other groups in the base, however, no one comes to the histachii's rescue; Sissiska and Enoch consider them expendable.

The boss histachii (hp 18) is much taller and thicker than the others; it is actually a transformed first generation megaloman who displeased Sissiska. Before he was corrupted, a flesh sample was extracted from him to grow the second-generation specimen incubating in area **50**.

Histachii (6): INT low; AL CE; AC 8; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 18, 11(×5); THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d3; SA can go berserk once/day for 2d6 rounds, gaining +2 to attack rolls; SD immune to *charm* and *hold* spells; SZ M; ML 10; XP 120; *MM*/370.

45. Slave Pens. Several cramped, 6' × 6' × 4' iron cages line the walls. The filth and dehumanizing conditions of the pens are almost unimaginable. All are empty, but PCs may judge from the bowl of water and gnawed crumbs in one of the cages that it was but lately vacated.

46. Smithy. Domino the illusionist has cast *illusionary wall* over the threshold between the corridor leading to this chamber and the main spiral. For all appearances, the main spiral continues upward seamlessly, with no breaks in its surface.

A huge forge dominates this room, furnished with all related tools: bellows, clamps, tongs, hammers, barrels of water, etc. A chimney guides smoke up to the surface, disposing of it underwater so that its bubbling resembles that of swamp gas (a simple U-shaped trap keeps the water from draining back into the chimney). Scattered across the floor are various piles of mundane weapons and ring, scale, chain, and leather armor. Two bins of coal are squeezed in among all this. Above the ozone smell, the faint stink of cigar smoke can be detected.

This room's two resident blacksmiths spend their days refitting captured or bought armor and weapons for the megalomen's larger frames. If the PCs enter, the two giant men wait by the doorway, cloaked by the *invisibility 10' radius* cast on Shan Hsi by Domino. Shan Hsi attempts to backstab the toughest PC while the

two megalomen leap into action. The warriors from the barracks and barracks annex arrive in 4 rounds.

If the two smiths have already left to help the megalomen in areas **42** and **43**, Shan Hsi is here by himself, invisibly standing atop one of the coal bins. He tries to evade discovery at all costs, dodging any contact with the PCs. If found out, he attempts to backstab before fleeing the complex and Wolfhill House. For Shan Hsi's full statistics, see area ***37***.

Third-generation megalomen (2): AL LE; AC 4; MV 12; F4; hp 25, 23; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (hammer) +7 (Strength); S 19 (+3/+7); SZ L (10' tall); ML 14; XP 120; chainmail, medium shield, warhammer.

These two were specially bred for their great strength, having been cloned from second-generation megalomen.

47. Sleeping Stones. Domino has also cast *illusionary wall* between this corridor's entrance and the main spiral. She created this wall a few days ago, giving her time to rest and rememorize her spells before casting other illusions.

Spaced irregularly about the room are various stone cubes, each one measuring 3–8 feet on a side. Their surfaces are warm to the touch, having been enchanted with a dweomer similar to that of a *ring of warmth*. The blocks function as beds for the cold-blooded yuan-ti.

48. Sauna. Like in area **44**, much of the floor has been scooped away to form a water-filled basin. The *ring of heating metal* once used by Hezekiel Wolf to power the boiler in area **38** has been attached to a finger-thick iron rod and tossed into the water; the rod glows red hot, vaporizing the water and filling the room with steam. Histachii slaves keep the basin full by lugging buckets from the pump room.

To one side of the pool's rim is a small pile of branches taken from the Mere outside. Above the pool is a network of metal bars, bolted to the walls and each other to create a massive trellis leading all the way to the ceiling. It is easily scaled. The framework (akin to a comfortable lounging sofa) and steam bath are used by Sissiska and other abomination yuan-ti to ward off the chill of these underground tunnels.

Baffled heroes judge a yuan-ti "science project."

Sitting atop this jungle gym is the real Esau Enoch, invisible thanks to Domino's spellcasting. He makes no sound, moving or ducking away from anyone who might accidentally bump into him. He is content to simply observe unless attacked.

If discovered, Enoch casts *sticks to snakes* on the piles of branches before yelling to Sissiska in area **49** for assistance. (She arrives in two rounds.) Next, he attempts to *polymorph* the first PC within reach into a flightless bird (to be devoured later), then casts *darkness 15' radius* before lunging forth and using his *ring of Myrkul* or *dagger of venom*. Enoch makes full use of the trellis-work's three dimensions and his own high Dexterity, nimbly swinging through the bars to dodge, attack, and retreat in an eyeblink. For game purposes, Enoch is assumed to have the tumbling nonweapon proficiency as long as he stays in this room; his AC drops by 4 if he has the initiative and does not attack. If he makes a proficiency check (16 or less), he suffers half-damage should he fall or be pushed from the top of the apparatus

(30 feet above) and no damage should he fall from a point no further than 10 feet from the floor.

For Enoch's full statistics, see area **37** above.

49. Commander's Lair. Boulders, gravel, and mounds of earth make moving through this room difficult—just as Commander Sissiska would have it. She is currently hiding 20 feet within a narrow, 2' wide tunnel that leads up and into the Mere. The entrance to the tunnel is concealed behind a large rock near the eastern wall.

Sissiska is the mastermind behind the cloning lab, which she has supervised ever since its establishment. Her duty to the yuan-ti cause is nothing less than to churn out the infantry needed by the serpent-men in their schemes of conquest. Though not a mage, her expertise in the science of eugenics allows her to use the book of cloning in area **50** as if she were a spellcaster.

The abomination wasn't thrilled to learn of Esau Enoch's defeat at Iniarv's Tower and even less joyful when she realized that investigation of Wolfhill House by nosy lawmen was a likely after-effect. However, she was swayed by Enoch's thinking and has allowed him to carry out his bait-and-switch subterfuge—which had better work for his sake. Unless the ruse fails or she is assaulted, Sissiska avoids combat with the PCs.

Sissiska (abomination yuan-ti): INT genius; AL CE; AC 0; MV 12; HD 9; hp 41; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 1d4/1d4 (constriction) or by spell; SA spells, constriction; MR 20%; SZ L (10' long); ML 15; XP 6,000; *MM*/369.

Spells (cast at 9th level, usable once per day): *cause fear; darkness 15' radius, snake charm; suggestion; neutralize poison, sticks to snakes.*

Sissiska closely resembles a naga, having a human (sharp-featured) face. The only difference is that after a short distance, her serpentine trunk divides into two separate tails, allowing her an accelerated movement rate as well as two constriction attacks per round.

If Sissiska feels that combat is unavoidable, she immediately casts *suggestion* (in Common) upon the most threatening warrior or priest in the party, planting the idea in his mind that he has been paralyzed and cannot move whatsoever. She then casts *cause fear* and *darkness 15' radius* and begins to constrict any PCs left unaffected. Enoch, meanwhile, arrives from area **48** in two rounds and attempts to backstab the nearest spellcaster before relinquishing his *invisibility*.

As an abomination, Sissiska knows that she is too important to the yuan-ti cause to die needlessly. Should the PCs overpower her megalomen soldiery and the rest, she gives the base up for lost and attempts to escape through her tunnel into the Mere. From there, she slithers forth to warn her brethren of the cloning operation's fate.

50. The Slave Vats.

> Light creeps around the bend of the ramp, growing brighter as you ascend. Finally, the slope simultaneously widens and flattens, and you find yourselves on the brink of a marvelous indoor garden.
>
> Sunlight breaks through a crack in the cavern roof to illuminate classical ruins overrun by fecund creepers. Scrub brush clings to fallen pediments and worn bricks, while spiraling ivy links six Corinthian columns in the middle of the room. Above the whole floats a filmy, humid mist on which bitter scents waft.
>
> At the center of the ring of pillars are the two men who attacked you earlier. The smaller, long-haired man sprawls unconscious, blood seeping from a head wound. The other man, his skin disfigured by birthmarks of varying sizes and shades, lies in a crumpled ball, murmuring to himself softly. Nearby is a giant spider, dead on its back. Its demise is recent: ichor still oozes from sword cuts in its belly.
>
> "I am me," whispers the man, "I am me—me—I made me! I made myself!"

This indoor garden is compliments of Domino's *hallucinatory terrain* spell, cast by her over the secret laboratory moments before the PCs entered the base; the giant spider is the result of an earlier misfire of her magic, which was immediately set upon by the megalomen guards. Beneath the veil of illusion is a horrifying reality: dispelling or disbelieving reveals the blocks of worn stone as tables on which boil noxious concoctions; brambles become test tubes; lianas are nexus of pipes and wires; the columns are liquid-filled cylinders—in which are suspended six megalomen clones in various stages of gestation. The source of the sunlight is a *continual light* spell permanently ensconced in a ceiling niche at this area's center.

The illusion of the garden lasts for seven hours after the party first enters the base, but two things may alarm the PCs that there is more here than meets the eye. First, they no doubt recognize the spider as being the result of afield spellcasting. Secondly, dwarven characters may be able to tell that the chamber is 20 feet underground—even though the faux-sunlight seems to shine from just beyond the rift in the ceiling 10 feet above.

All in all, the contents of the room represent over 1,000,00 gp worth of equipment and chemicals, not the least of which is a steel-bound grimoire detailing the exact process for cloning living tissue (as per the 8th-level wizard spell *clone*).

The six tanks that support the clones are giant *jars of preserving* which, when used in conjunction with the *clone* spell, act as artificial wombs for their contents. The tanks are AC –4 but shatter to pieces with one successful blow. Also, a rectangular aquarium to one side of the room holds a pink, membranous material: a set of cloned human lungs harvested by Sissiska. Germinating within the bronchioles are *air spores* (see *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™*, *Volume 1*, page 26), enough for one dose for each PC.

Should the PCs begin trashing the room or disturbing its contents, Esau Enoch, Shan Hsi, and the two third-generation megalomen from area **46** arrive two rounds afterward to defend the lab. The eight megalomen from area **42** arrive the following round, and both Sissiska and the four guards from area **43** join the round after that. All fight to the death to preserve the laboratory.

The wounded figure at the room's center is a histachii slave who was

polymorphed by Sissiska (using her yuan-ti *polymorph other* ability) into a double of Shan Hsi. The creature was then beaten unconscious by the abomination so that it couldn't give itself away. It revives after eight hours and babbles incoherently until exhausted.

False Shan Hsi (*polymorphed* histachii): INT low; AL CE; AC 10; MV 12; HD 2+2; hp 13 (0 currently); THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65; *MM*/370 (yuan-ti).

The other figure is none other than the clone grown by Esau Enoch to act as his scapegoat, the fulcrum upon which his entire machination rests. The clone's mind broke long ago, and its captivity and ill treatment at the hands of the yuan-ti have only exacerbated its madness. Left to his own devices, the clone lies in a near-comatose state, trying to convince himself of his own identity. He fights only to avoid recapture or if brought into the presence of a yuan-ti or megaloman—the latter actions causing the creature to fly into a murderous rage, adding +2 to his attack and damage rolls. He immediately attacks the real Esau Enoch if his presence is known and gains +3 bonuses against him; nothing short of either being's death halts the clone's fury. Both he and the false Shan Hsi are weaponless, but the Enoch clone grabs a weapon should one become available.

Little can be learned from the clone directly, although *ESP*, psionics, or similar methods reveal the truth of his origins. Save for his lack of equipment, the clone's clothes and belongings are identical to those of his nemesis.

Esau Enoch's clone (pureblood yuan-ti thief): AL NE; AC 2; MV 12; T10; hp 36; THAC0 16; #AT 2; Dmg 1d2 or by weapon; SA spells, backstab for quadruple damage (+4 to hit and target's shield and Dexterity bonuses are negated); SD contortion; S 15, D 16, C 13, I 17, W 11, Ch 13; MR 20%; ML 14; XP 8,000; *MM*/369; PP 45%, OL 60%, F/RT 40%, MS 75%, HS 85%, DN 60%, CW 85%, RL 35%.

Spells (cast at 6th level, usable once per day): *cause fear; darkness 15' radius, snake charm; suggestion; neutralize poison, polymorph other, sticks to snakes.*

Concluding the Adventure

Should the PCs be duped and return to Iniarv's Tower without having either captured or killed the real Esau Enoch, then the yuan-ti's plot has succeeded and they continue to cultivate their resources for the future, to the detriment of everyone else concerned.

On the other hand, if Enoch is slain, the party receives half of his experience points as a story award. Only if the PCs can effectively convince Sir Justin that something strange and sinister is apparent in Wolfhill House is further investigation made. Unless the PCs have slain Sissiska and destroyed the secret laboratory, however, Melenikus finds that a team of yuan-ti and megalomen hidden elsewhere in the Mere has beaten him to the base and absconded with all its equipment.

If, however, the party returns with the real Enoch as their captive, they receive his full experience value as an added story reward. Enoch is turned over to authorities for interrogation, and a thorough search of Wolfhill House follows. Again, should Sissiska have escaped, Melenikus finds nothing to corroborate the party's story. But—if Melenikus does find evidence of the cloning operation, then an alarum is raised. Heralds are dispatched to Waterdeep and Leilon, warning leaders to step up their vigilance; mages peer into their *crystal balls*, concerned by this new threat; temple elders meet to tug at their beards and petition their gods for guidance. Civilization grinds onward.

If the PCs require healing, or if one or more of their members was slain, Sir Justin has his watchers mend injuries and cast raise dead spells. He offers the PCs a writ for 2,500 gp if they successfully captured Enoch. He offers an equal amount if they successfully thwarted the yuan-ti cloning operation and have proof of their success.

If the PCs are successful and wish to continue serving Sir Justin, they must wait at Iniarv's tower until the knight decides what area of the Mere of Dead Men he wishes them to explore next ... Ω

New Magical Item

Ring of Myrkul

The *rings of Myrkul*, few in number, were created and worn by Myrkulite priests before the Time of Troubles. When Myrkul perished atop Blackstaff Tower in Waterdeep, his secret temple in the heart of the Mere sank into the swamp. A number of Myrkulites fled the sunken temple and perished, giving up their lives—and their magical rings—to the monstrous denizens of the Mere.

The *rings of Myrkul*—gold bands painted black and adorned with the white skull symbol of Myrkul—glow faintly in the presence of a *detect evil* spell. The rings allowed the Myrkulites to identify one another. More importantly, the rings served as keys, enabling the priests to enter their temple without incurring the wrath of its many guardians.

Anyone wearing a *ring of Myrkul* is granted the ability to *walk among the dead*. All mindless undead and intelligent undead with fewer than 6 HD will not attack the ring wearer unless the wearer attacks them first. Moreover, the ring wearer can cast *chill touch* spell thrice/day and *ghoul touch* once/day. Prior to the Time of Troubles, if the wearer of the ring was a Myrkulite priest, he could invoke a number of other effects, but these greater necromantic powers vanished when Myrkul died.

Several *rings of Myrkul* lost in the swamp have since been found. Evil, intelligent creatures are drawn to the rings as if by the eighth-level wizard's *sympathy* spell (range 30 yards).

Esau Enoch, the yuan-ti villain in this adventure, has a *ring of Myrkul* in his possession. Esau stole the ring from a monstrously-enlarged bullywug living in the mire near Wolfhill House. (The yuan-ti and his cohorts killed the monster before making off with the ring.) The importance of this ring becomes apparent in the last adventure in the *Mere of Dead Men* series.

XP Value: 250 **GP Value:** 1,000

A daring adventurer receives a swarm *reception.*

CHALLENGE OF CHAMPIONS II

BY JOHNATHAN M. RICHARDS

The clock is ticking ...

Artwork by Rags Morales
"Scenario 3" Map by Chris Perkins

Johnathan writes: "I designed this sequel specifically for my two boys, Stuart and Logan, who didn't score as well on the first Challenge as they had hoped and wanted a chance to redeem themselves."

"Challenge of Champions II" is an AD&D® adventure for a party of four PCs of any level—one wizard, one warrior, one priest, and one rogue. It is a sequel to the original "Challenge of Champions" that appeared in Issue #58, but it is not necessary to have played that adventure to play this one. Like the original, this adventure takes place on the outskirts of a major city and can be inserted into almost any campaign.

It is important that the DM read the entire adventure before running it. A firm understanding of each of the ten scenarios is necessary for the smooth operation of the adventure and will help the DM adjudicate alternative solutions the players might devise to each challenge.

Adventure Background

Once again, the Adventurers' Guild is sponsoring an event to test the skills of teams of adventurers. The contest is open to adventuring teams of all levels of experience; however, each team must consist of one wizard, one warrior, one priest, and one rogue. As far as composition goes, it doesn't matter whether the wizard is a specialist, a generic mage, or something exotic like a wu jen, provided he is of the wizard class; likewise with the other classes. Multi-class and dual-class PCs must choose which "slot" to fill on the team; an elf fighter/mage can fill either the wizard or warrior slot. In most cases, the availability of the other slots determines this choice; in the example above, if there was a warrior in the elf's party but no wizard, the elf would choose to fill the wizard slot for the purpose of the contest.

The contest is held in two days' time at the edge of the city. Teams have already begun forming and registering for the contest. Some of the same teams participated in the original Challenge of Champions held the previous year, while others are new to this type of contest.

Each team must be registered at the Guild Headquarters in the city by sundown the night before the contest. The team members must each provide the guild with their name, profession (wizard, warrior, priest, or rogue), and team name. They must also pay the entrance fee of 5 gp, unless they're already Guild members, in which case the entry fee is waived (another benefit of Guild membership).

If the PCs aren't Guild members, they get to hear the sales pitch: for a mere 25 gp per year, the Adventurers' Guild will provide the PCs with a wealth of information, beneficial contacts, and a slight discount on standard adventuring gear. Other benefits can be added as the DM sees fit; possibilities include selling expendable magical items like scrolls and potions at reasonable cost and providing a place to sell the various treasures recovered from recent adventures and excursions.

The four winners of the contest are granted a lifetime membership into the Adventurers' Guild, as well as the trophies and prestige usually associated with such an honor.

For the Dungeon Master

The contest itself is a series of ten scenarios, each designed to test the leadership, adaptability, and team cohesion of the adventuring group. The scenarios are set up so as to be of equal difficulty to everyone, regardless of level. In other words, a 20th-level wizard has no advantage over a 1st-level one. In addition, an attempt has been made to negate any advantage those contestants who went through the first Challenge of Champions might have over those who are experiencing the contest for the first time.

The rules are as follows: the team members must show up in regular clothing (armor is not permitted in the contest). Weapons may not be brought to the contest grounds; those scenarios involving weapons will have them pre-positioned. The same goes for magical items of any type. Spellcasters may have no spells memorized; all spells used in the contest will be cast through the use of *rings of spell storing*, as this allows all spells to be cast at the same level and negates any advantage higher-level wizards and priests may have over lower-level ones. Those wizards with familiars are not allowed to bring their animals into the contest. All PCs are inspected by a Guild wizard using *detect magic*, and those attempting to smuggle magical items into the contest are immediately disqualified.

At the start of each scenario, the official (a member of the Adventurers' Guild overseeing the proper operation of that particular scenario) briefs the team on the starting equipment they may use, and the team may inventory the items to ensure everything is in place. Command words to any magical items requiring them are provided at this time. Once the team is satisfied that all equipment is in place, the official begins to read the briefing, and the clock starts ticking. The briefing consists of the team's goal, as well as any special rules for that scenario. The team has 15 minutes to accomplish each scenario. At the scenario's end, all starting equipment must be placed back in position for the next team, and the PCs move on to the next scenario. Unless told otherwise, the PCs cannot take anything from one scenario to the next.

If the adventuring group does not include a member of each of the four main classes, the PCs can recruit one or more NPCs from the single hopefuls milling about the contest. See the "Rounding Out the Team" sidebar for more information.

Just one word of caution: although this adventure can be played with one DM and one player (with the player running all four team members), that puts the entire burden of coming up with solutions on the lone player. It is better to have input and ideas from several people. The odds of a team doing well tend to increase with the number of participating players.

On the other hand, this adventure can be used as a good "filler" on a night when not all of the normal gang of players can make it to the gaming session. Rather than have someone else run their PCs for them in their absence or partake in an adventure without their PCs as part of the team, the DM can use the four NPCs in the "Rounding Out the Team" sidebar, dividing them between the players, and have them go through the adventure as a team. That way, those who didn't make it to the gaming session won't have their PCs falling behind in experience points.

Running the Scenarios

At the beginning of each scenario, the DM should show the players the illustration corresponding to that event. (Permission is granted to photocopy the player handouts and maps for home game use only). Allow the players to read the appropriate spells in the *Player's Handbook* and magical item entries in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*. Once the players have had a chance to do so, the DM should give them the task briefing. Once the briefing begins, the DM needs to track the time. (A stopwatch comes in handy.)

The PCs have a total of 15 minutes to accomplish the task, but part of the time will be spent deciding what to do, and this is done in "real time" by the players. Once the players have chosen a course of action, the DM checks the clock, and the PCs have the remaining time to accomplish their actions. For instance, if the briefing takes 30 seconds to read, and the players spend three minutes deciding on a course of action, the PCs will have 11 minutes 30 seconds (approximately 12 rounds) to accomplish the scenario's goal.

The DM is provided with a "school solution" to each scenario. This is the way the designers at the Adventurers' Guild expect the goal to be accomplished. However, it is by no means the only (or necessarily the best) way to achieve the goal. It is provided mainly for the DM's reference, in the event the PCs fail to accomplish their task and the players don't think it can be done. Be flexible in all cases. Allow a good idea an appropriate chance of success. Some avenues of approach are poorly-conceived, however, and many of these are given to the DM as examples of what does not work.

The Guild official proctoring each scenario is responsible for ensuring the safety of each of the adventurers. While many of the scenarios place the contestants in danger of physical harm, the official has a means of countering that danger; for example, several scenarios involve crossing bodies of water, and the Guild wizards proctoring those scenarios are

Rounding Out the Team

If the PCs are short a character class or two, they can meet up with any of the four extra PCs described here. These extra PCs are all 1st level and have avoided signing up together as a team because they fear they lack the experience to perform well in the contest. Each one would eagerly join a more experienced party, however.

The DM should feel free to use these extra PCs to fill out the party for the purpose of this adventure; once the adventure is over, they can either stay on as NPCs or go their separate ways, as best fits the DM's campaign. In any case, the DM should not use these PCs to provide solutions or input during the scenarios. The contest is designed to challenge the player's ingenuity and resourcefulness, so no help should be forthcoming from the DM via these extra PCs.

Dyenna Redblade: AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; F1; hp 7; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 14, C 11, I 10, W 11, Ch 12; ML 11.

Dyenna is a hard-working individual who spends several hours each day honing her skills with the sword. She is proficient in the use of the short sword, long sword, dagger, and light crossbow.

Jasparius the Lean: AL LG; AC 10; MV 12; M1; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 8, D 12, C 9, I 14, W 10, Ch 9; ML 11.

Jasparius is a scrawny, pencil-thin wizard fresh from his apprenticeship. He is proficient with the staff.

Kelly Greenbriar: AL N; AC 10; MV 12; D1; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 10, C 9, I 9, W 13, Ch 15; ML 11.

Although born and raised in the city, Kelly has long felt attuned to nature and has recently completed her initial training as a druid. She is proficient with the spear and sling.

Roberto "the Lizard": AL CN; AC 10; MV 12; T1; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 14, C 9, I 10, W 8, Ch 10; ML 11; PP 15%, OL 10%, F/RT 5%, MS 20%, HS 25%, DN 15%, CW 90%, RL 0%.

Roberto is called "the Lizard" because of his ability to climb walls. He is proficient with the short sword and dart.

The statistics above describe the four extra PCs as they appear for the second annual Challenge of Champions. If the DM wishes to make them permanent additions to the party, he'll have to outfit them with weapons, armor, spells, and the like, but these concerns are outside the scope of this adventure.

ready to cast *water breathing* immediately upon signs of trouble.

Other dangers are more artificial, like stepping onto a square that represents an explosive plate. In any case, the official has the power to declare any PC "dead" at any time, and he does so if he has to save the PC or if the PC commits a "lethal" act (like stepping on an "explosive plate"). PCs who have been declared "dead" are not allowed to participate further in the scenario in which they "died," and they receive no points for that scenario. They are allowed to watch their teammates finish the scenario without them, but any assistance on their part, whether it be actual participation in accomplishing the scenario's goal or even shouting suggestions from the sidelines, are grounds for disqualifying the entire team. Once the team moves on to the next scenario, the "dead" PC is restored to "living" status and continues as before.

As the PCs complete each scenario, record their scores on the score sheet (see adjacent page). This makes it easier for the players to see how they are doing and, more importantly, lets the DM tally the final scores when the second annual Challenge of Champions is over.

For the Players

The morning of the contest, your team gathers at the edge of the city. You are approached by a member of the Adventurers' Guild running the contest and ushered over to a large tent. Inside, you are asked to sign in and take your places on one of the many benches inside the tent. There are a total of 18 teams participating this year. Once all the teams are present, a Guild spokesman goes over the rules and randomly determines team numbers by drawing names out of a barrel. He adds, "This time around, you'll be going on a little treasure hunt of sorts. Don't be surprised if some of the goals you'll be striving to complete seem a little strange; you'll be gathering items and information helpful in finding a buried treasure at the end of the contest—a worthy goal, don't you think? Also, in four of the scenarios, you'll have the chance to earn a ring denoting your chosen class—much like the amulets used in last year's contest."

At this point, the DM should go over the competition rules with the players and answer any questions they may have about them. Once the players are satisfied that they understand, the DM can continue to read or paraphrase the following:

Your team is number three. This means that, with only two teams starting the scenarios before you, you've only got a half-hour or so before you begin. As the first team is escorted out of the tent and off to the first scenario, you notice some of the other teams gathering together and making wagers on the outcome of the contest. "We're starting up a pool," says one of the competitors. "Do you guys want in?"

This is an opportunity for the players to partake in some roleplaying in this otherwise puzzle-oriented adventure. The other teams are of all types: some are loud and obnoxious, others quiet and reserved, but most believe they have a shot at winning the contest, and quite a few are willing to put their money where their mouths are in the form of a betting pool.

The Adventurers' Guild doesn't have a monetary reward for winning the contest—it isn't being run for that purpose—so a few teams are each putting up 100 gp; the winning team takes home the pot. Since teams aren't allowed to bring anything to the contest, no one actually carries the money on them, but a sheet of paper is passed around, and those who wish to participate do so by signing the sheet. The other teams ensure that the losers pay up. Not

everyone wishes to enter the pool; out of the 18 teams entered into this year's Challenge of Champions, seven have done so. If the PCs decide to wager, it'll mean a pot of 800 gp going to the wagering team with the highest score. Note that this can serve as a backup reward for the PCs; even if they don't win the contest, they might still win the betting pool.

Scenario #1: CAFE SEAT

You soon find yourselves in the company of a stocky, red-bearded Guild warrior named Jayme. He escorts you to the starting area, right outside the entrance to the first scenario. He gives everyone a quick frisk and has a Guild wizard named Kuthbar cast a *detect magic* spell. "They're clean," pronounces the wizard in a nasal voice, and Jayme explains that this is part of the Guild rules, to make sure no one tries sneaking in magical items, lockpicks, and other useful items. "We wouldn't want anyone starting off with a hidden advantage, would we?" he asks. "Well then, if you're all ready, just step through this door."

Going through the door, you meet an older wizard wearing the red robes of the Adventurers' Guild proctors. "Good morning all," he says. "My name is Mussfinch, and I'll be officiating Scenario #1. Here is your starting equipment." Mussfinch hands you three cards—each with strange runes along two sides—and a small hand mirror. You are standing in a 10' × 20' area; behind the wizard you see a 40' × 40' room laid out like a giant chessboard, in blue and red tiles. On the other side of the chessboard is another 10' × 20' area on which rests a four-legged stool, like those you'd find in a bar.

A whistle blows, signaling the start of the scenario, at which time Mussfinch says, "Your goal here is to make your way safely across the room, reach the cafe seat over there, and read the rune carved into the bottom of it. The rune might come in handy in a later scenario. You have your equipment and your goal. Good luck!"

The clock is ticking, and your adventure has begun!

Score Sheet

Team Name: _____

Scenario	Wizard	Warrior	Priest	Rogue	Total
#1 CAFE SEAT	____	____	____	____	____
#2 TOW PESTS OR DWARF	____	____	____	____	____
#3 RUNT GIRTH	____	____	____	____	____
#4 NET DAN THERE	____	____	____	____	____
#5 CAPES SHOUT	____	____	____	____	____
#6 EON PETS	____	____	____	____	____
#7 THORN STEW	____	____	____	____	____
#8 HORNETS AT EVENS	____	____	____	____	____
#9 SPACE & POST	____	____	____	____	____
#10 REUSE RAT BOWEL	____	____	____	____	____
TOTAL	____	____	____	____	____

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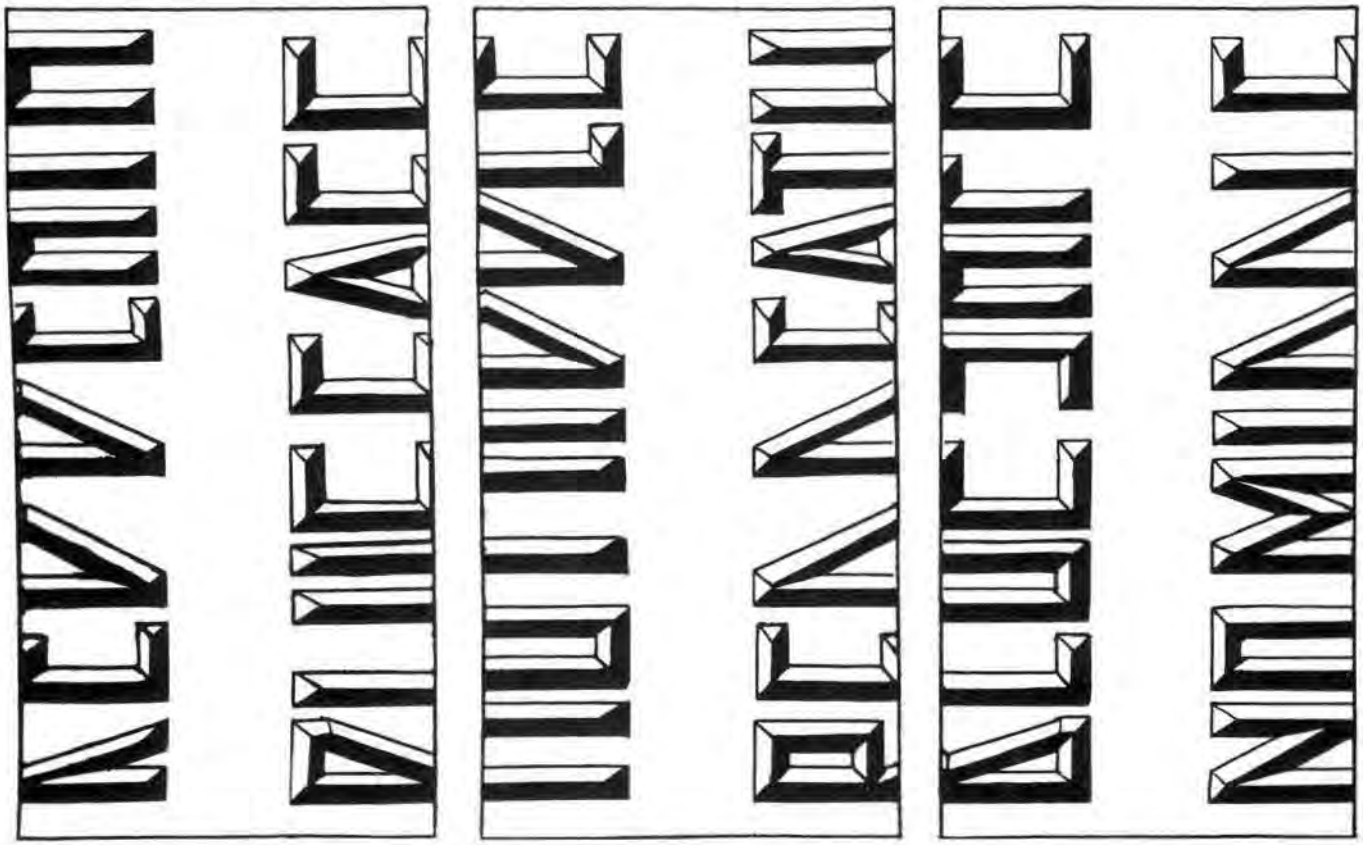
The ceiling of this room appears to be 10' tall, and the room itself is lit by a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: The team earns 10 points per PC who makes it to the stool at the far side of the chessboard within the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: The PCs should use the three cards to find the solution to this scenario. When placed together in the correct sequence, they spell out the following messages: "RED DEATH," "BLUE SAFE," and "NO MIDDLE." The way past the chessboard is to step only on the blue squares, avoiding all red squares and the 16 squares in the middle of the board. By doing so, the PCs can make it safely to the cafe seat.

DM Notes: The central 16 squares are, in reality, an illusion cast over a 15' pit lined with soft sand. A *silence 15' radius* spell has been cast upon the floor of the pit, so



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anyone falling into it cannot contact his teammates and is considered "dead" for the rest of the scenario.

A PC stepping on a red square activates a pressure-released smoke bomb that momentarily fills the area with a puff of black smoke. During this time, Mussfinch uses the smoke to cover the fact that he's using a *ring of telekinesis* to whisk the PC activating the bomb straight up through the apparent ceiling, which is itself an illusion. Once above the ceiling, the "dead" PC is monitored by a Guild illusionist who cautions him to remain silent. The "dead" PC can watch his teammates through the illusory ceiling but is forbidden to talk. To the other PCs, anyone stepping on a red square or any of the central 16 squares sets off a puff of smoke and is not seen again. The Guild illusionist creates any necessary puffs of smoke from the central 16 squares.

The mirror is not needed for this scenario but is there for two reasons: as a red herring (to drive home the fact that not everything provided in the scenarios is necessarily going to be helpful) and as an "equalizer" to try to prevent those who have gone through the first Challenge of Champions from having an advantage. (The first scenario in that one involved runes much like the ones shown here, but it was necessary to reflect them in a mirror to form the complete words.) Using the mirror to make sense of the runes in this scenario yields gibberish.

The DM might wish to use a real chessboard and figurines (or chess pieces) for this scenario so that the players can show him exactly where their PCs are walking. If you do this, be sure everyone understands ahead of time which squares represent "red" and which squares represent "blue" on the chessboard, so there are no misunderstandings. Each square on the chessboard is 5' square. If a PC makes it to the stool, he may look underneath it to find the rune carved there. It will be helpful in the next scenario.

Once the PCs have finished the first scenario, mark their scores down on the scoresheet and then read or paraphrase the following:

Scenario #2: TOW PESTS OR DWARF

Another whistle marks the end of the first scenario, and Mussfinch gathers up the rune cards and the mirror. In the meantime, you are met by a Guild priest named Parnival who escorts you to the beginning of the second scenario. This one involves water: you find yourself next to a pole on one side of a pool of water, and across the pool you see an identical pole. Between the poles is a rope and pulley system connected to a small raft. The raft is currently on your side of the pool. Parnival shows you your starting equipment: two locked chests, each bearing a different rune carved into its side. Those who successfully completed the first scenario recognize one of the runes as the one that was carved on the bottom of the cafe seat.

A whistle blows, and Parnival reads your task briefing: "Inside one of these chests is a wounded dwarf, whom you must escort

across the raging river"—here he indicates the pool of water—"in order to free him from the chest and get him the proper medical treatment. The other chest contains a couple of pesties, who will cause you nothing but trouble. There is a key on a chain at the far pole; this will unlock either chest. The raft, as you can see, is big enough to hold one chest or one individual, but not both. Remember, the river is a raging torrent; anyone falling in will be declared "dead," no exceptions. You must all four be at the far side of the river with the dwarf, unlocked from his chest, by the end of the 15 minutes. Begin!"

Each chest is rather heavy and is perfectly waterproof and soundproof, so the PCs cannot determine what is in each one unless they recognize the rune from the last scenario. PCs who try lifting them will discover each one requires a combined Strength of at least 20 to do so. The raft is moved by tugging on the rope; this can be done by the person on the raft or by an individual on either side of the river.

Scoring: 10 points per PC at the far end of the river at the end of the 15-minute time limit, as long as the dwarf has been brought over and his chest unlocked. No points are given to PCs who make it to the finish but leave the dwarf behind on the starting side of the river. No points are given for bringing over the pesties' chest.

Solution: PC #1 uses the raft to go to the other side. The raft is tugged back to the start, and PC #2 uses it to get across. The raft is again sent back to the start, and PCs #3 and #4 lug a chest onto the raft. (If they make the correlation between the rune on the chest and the rune on the cafe seat, they choose that chest.) The raft is towed across the river, where PCs #1 and #2 lug it off the raft and open it with the key. If it's the chest holding the dwarf, they send the raft back so PCs #3 and #4 can use it to cross, one at a time. If it isn't, they send the raft back for the other chest, and then PCs #3 and #4 each use it in turn to cross the river.

DM Notes: The chests cannot be opened except by the key on the far side of the river. It takes one round (one minute) for the raft to make it across the river, no matter who or what is on it, if anything. If the pesties' chest is opened, they pelt the PCs with rotten fruit on the far side of the river, then scamper off to their nearby camouflaged hidey-holes. During that round, PCs pelted by fruit are unable to take any actions. (Smart PCs on the "start" side of the river will begin towing the raft back to their side in order to save time.)

Because of the pesties' fast movement rate (21), it is unlikely that the PCs can catch them before they escape into their hidey-holes. Once safely inside, the PCs should be unable to force open the doors to the pesties' hidey-holes with the equipment at hand, and doing so would be no benefit to the PCs in any case, as the pesties can offer nothing in the way of assistance in completing the scenario.

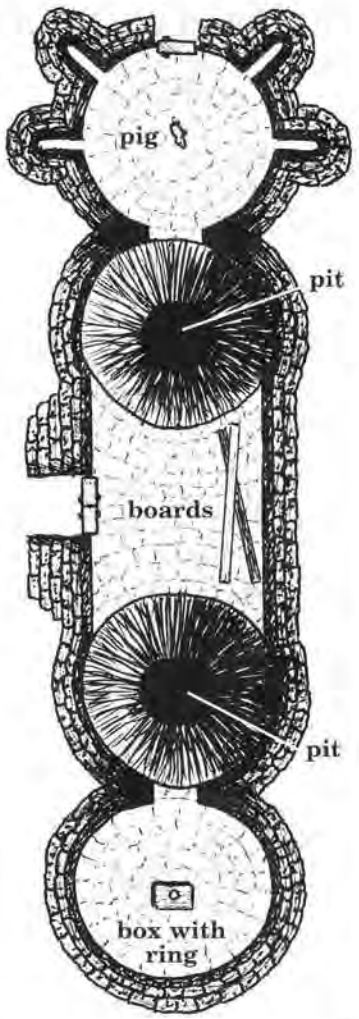
It is also possible for PCs to cross the river by crawling hand-over-hand along the rope. This is faster (more than one PC can cross at a time that way), but more dangerous: each PC must make a Strength check or fall into the river and be declared "dead." Parnival is standing by with *water breathing* spells if they are needed.

The pesties are, in fact, *polymorphed* Guild members. (Actually, they're volunteers who were lucky enough to be selected.) They crawl back into their chest when the scenario is being set up for the next team. The young dwarf is also an Adventurers' Guild volunteer who enjoys snoozing in his waterproof and soundproof chest ("Easiest job in the whole contest," he says). The chest contains 30 minutes' worth of air, and as the scenario lasts 15 minutes at most, the dwarf is in no danger of suffocating as long as the chest is opened after each team goes through this scenario. In an emergency, the chest can be opened by command word from the inside.

Scenario #3: RUNT GIRTH

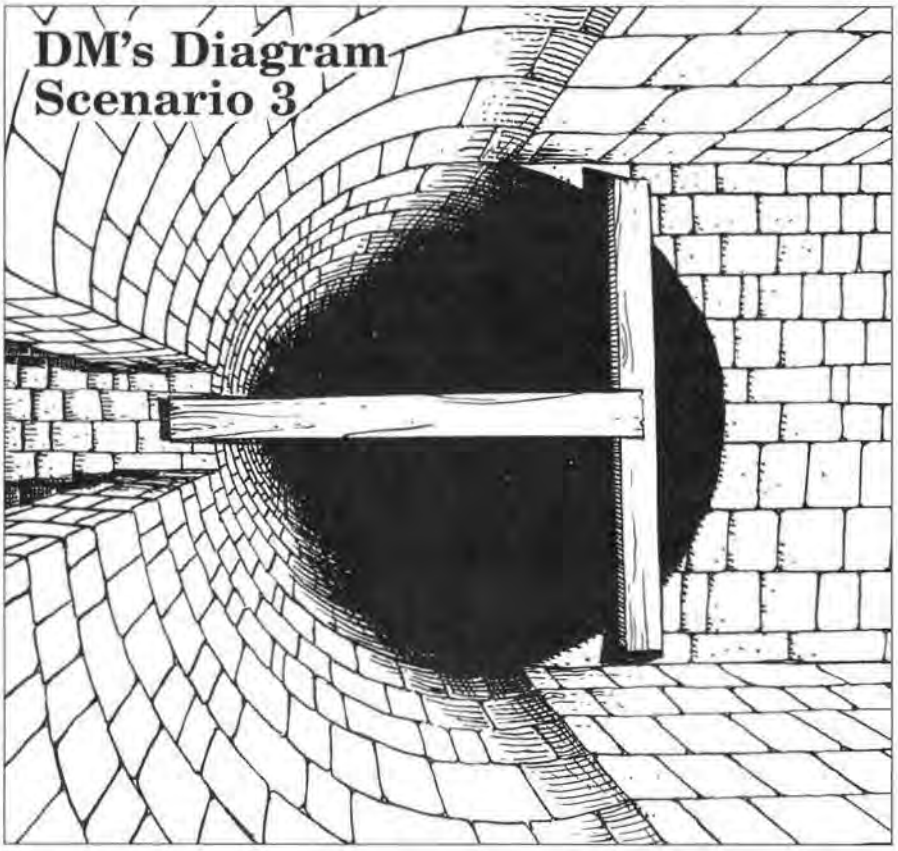
You are met by a young wizard introducing himself as Julian. Julian leads you to an oddly shaped room flanked by two 20'-diameter pits and points out your meager starting equipment: two 18'-long boards and a cloth measuring tape.

Scenario 3



"There is one more item of starting equipment," he says. "It's a *ring of mammal control*, but unfortunately, it gets to start over there." Julian points to a small box on the far side of one of the pits. On the box you can see a small ring.

The whistle blows, and Julian reads the task briefing. "Your quest this time is an unusual one: you must measure the girth of a runt pig, found over there"—he points to a room across the other pit—"and then exit through the far door within your 15-minute time limit."



The pits are both 20' in diameter and 30' deep. On either side of the pits is a 20' diameter circular room, one holding a ring on a box, the other, a small pig. The room in which the PCs start is 19' from the north wall (with the door) to the south wall. *Continual light* spells provide illumination in all areas.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the door within the time limit, provided the measurement of the runt's girth is determined.

Solution: The PCs place one board lengthwise (going north to south) across the pit to the west, then place the other one from the center of the first board across the pit, forming a "T" (see the diagram for details). One PC walks along the T-bridge and takes the *ring of mammal control*. Returning to the start, the PCs dismantle the bridge and make a similar one across the other pit. The PC wearing the ring uses it to command the pig to remain still, while another uses the measuring tape to measure the pig's girth. Then all four PCs exit through the door in the pig's room.

DM Notes: The boards are too short to be used as bridges across the pit except in the "T" shape noted above. The runt will run away from the PCs unless commanded to remain still by the person wearing the *ring of mammal control*. There are four cubbyholes in the pig's room, each 4' deep, allowing the little runt to get out of arm's reach of the PCs. A gnome or halfling PC can squeeze into a cubbyhole to drag out an unwilling runt (this takes a full round in itself), but other PCs will not fit.

It is possible to catch the runt without using the ring, but this requires stealth, a bit of luck, and a successful Dexterity check at –6. If the check succeeds, the PC caught the runt in his arms, but he must make a successful Dexterity check each round thereafter (at normal chances) to prevent the little pig from squirming free. It will take 1d3 rounds to measure the runt's girth in such a fashion, and if it escapes it heads for the nearest cubbyhole.

Anyone falling into a pit has a *feather fall* spell cast upon him immediately by Julian, but this means the PC is "dead" for the rest of the scenario. Dexterity checks are not required to walk over the boards if they're made into a T-shaped bridge, but checks are required if the PCs try something like having three PCs standing as counterweights on a board suspended over a pit while the other PC "walks the plank" and then jumps to the far side. In this case, a failed Dexterity check means the hapless PC has fallen into the pit.

Incidentally, the runt's girth is 13 inches.

Scenario #4: NET DAN THERE

The next scenario is proctored by a gruff Guild warrior named Justin. He leads you to a 10' × 10' platform with a railing, overlooking a larger area made up of pasture land exposed to the outside air. Ten feet away is another raised platform, similar in size to the one you're on, except it doesn't have a railing. Thirty feet below is a lone ram grazing contentedly on mouthfuls of grass. "That there's Dan," says Justin. "Here's your starting equipment." He hands each of you a drawstring bag filled with 50 copper pieces. "No need to count 'em, they're all there," growls Justin. He gives the wizard a *ring of spell storing*, a 10' × 10' net, and a broom, explaining that the ring has a *Tenser's floating disc* spell stored in it. "As for the rest of you, one of you guys gets this *ring of telekinesis*. It'll move up to five pounds. Who wants it?" He hands the ring to one of the other team members. "Okay, now you"—pointing at the wizard—"come with me." Justin leaves by the door with the wizard, and you see them enter the other platform, where Justin snaps a chain on the wizard's foot. Once he's sure of a snug fit, he exits the wizard's platform and returns to the other three.

At the whistle, Justin reads the task briefing. "Okay, your task this time is to net Dan over there, using only the equipment I gave you. And you, wizard—if you're successful at netting Dan there, you're gonna get your wizard's ring."

The wizard is chained to the corner of his or her platform such that

he or she can move in a quarter-circle arc but can't quite reach the far corner of the platform.

Scoring: 10 points per PC if Dan the ram is successfully netted, or none for anyone if the attempt fails. The wizard receives only 5 points if he isn't the one to net Dan.

Solution: The three other PCs toss their bags of coins to the wizard, who ties one to each corner of the net. He then activates the spell and places the net on the floating disc. In the meantime, the PC wearing the *ring of telekinesis* uses it to maneuver the broom over by Dan and steer the ram over to the area between the two platforms by swatting the creature with the broom in the direction he wants Dan to go. Once Dan's in place, the PCs call directions to the wizard to align the *Tenser's floating disc* with the ram. Once it's in place, the wizard directs it off the edge of the platform, at which time it disappears, sending the net falling directly onto Dan.

DM Notes: Due to the wizard's restricted range of motion, he cannot see the ram once he's in position and must rely on the other PCs to direct his floating disc. If the PCs do so, and the net has been weighed at the ends with the bags of coins, the net hits Dan automatically. If the net is not weighted, it has only a 50% chance of successfully netting Dan. The *ring of telekinesis* is strong enough to move the broom but not the net, as the net weighs 10 lbs. If the PCs wish, they can have the wizard throw the net over to them, and one of them can try to net Dan manually, but remember that he will be incurring a penalty on his attack roll unless he has the net as one of his weapon proficiencies. To see whether the wizard gets the net over to the PCs successfully, roll 1d20. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the sum of the wizard's Strength and Dexterity, the net made it to the other PCs' platform. If not, the throw was short and the net ends up on the ground below.

If Dan is netted successfully using the *Tenser's floating disc* spell, the wizard is given the wizard's ring once freed. He may wear this ring in subsequent scenarios, although it has no purpose until the end of the contest. If Dan is not netted, or if a different PC nets Dan, the wizard does not earn the ring.

Scenario #5: CAPES SHOUT

You are escorted down to the next scenario by a dark-haired Guild rogue named Luther. He leads you to a room and shows you your starting equipment: two 12' × 2' boards and an 18' ladder. There is a door leading into a 10' × 36' corridor. The corridor has eight 3' windows, four to a side, and hanging on pegs between each window is a cloak or cape. A door is set into the far wall of the corridor.

Luther reads the task briefing when the whistle goes off: "You must make it through the corridor and out the door at the end. However, each cape has a *magic mouth* cast on it that will scream like blazes if anyone or anything touches the floor, thereby ending the scenario. Also, inside a pocket of one of the capes is the rogue's ring—it's yours if you can get to it."

The windows are all 3' × 3' square and four feet from the floor. They are open-air windows with no glass panes. There is a 6' interval between each window, and in the intervals between the windows hang six capes. The ceiling in the corridor is 10' high and lit by a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it through the far door without setting off the *magic mouths*. If a *magic mouth* is activated, any PCs already through the far door earn their 10 points, while any still in the corridor at that time receive no points. The rogue receives only 5 points if he makes it out the door but fails to retrieve his ring.

Solution: One PC gets on his hands and knees in the doorway just outside the corridor, and the ladder is placed across his back, jutting out into the room. While the other two steady the ladder, the rogue takes a board and crawls out along the ladder. He places the board into one window far enough to fit the other end into the window directly across, then returns to the starting room. The ladder is removed from the PC's back and placed across the board in the windows. The rogue takes the second board and climbs onto the ladder; the other PCs extend it out far enough so that the rogue can place the second board in position across the second set of windows. The ladder is then positioned across both boards, and all PCs climb up onto the ladder, positioning themselves on the front board and ladder. The back board is removed and sent up front to be placed along the next set of windows, the ladder is positioned across the boards again, and so on until the end is reached. In the meantime, the rogue checks the capes' pockets as he passes them; the ring is in the second cape on the north wall. Once the ladder extends to the far door, the PCs open it, one crawls across and out the door then holds the ladder in place while the other PCs exit across the ladder and out the hall.

DM Notes: Of course, if the PCs start to run out of time, there is a shortcut to the solution: as each cape comes within reach, it can be picked up, checked to see if it holds the rogue's ring, and then pitched out a window.

Once all of the capes have been thrown out of the room, the PCs are free to jump down to the floor and simply walk out of the door. The *magic mouths* cannot be activated if they're not in the corridor to detect someone touching the floor.

Rogues are free to use their climb walls abilities to cross the corridor, although this doesn't help the rest of their party. climb walls rolls are made at the rogue's normal chances of success, but a failed roll indicates that he falls to the floor, taking no damage but setting off the *magic mouths* and ending the scenario. The pegs holding the capes won't support much weight, so anyone trying to stand on them or climb onto a board supported by a peg likewise crashes to the floor.

If the rogue manages to get his ring and makes it to the end of the corridor, he may wear the ring in subsequent scenarios.

Scenario #6: EON PETS

You are met at the other side of the door to Scenario #5 by Marilyssa, the Guild priestess. She takes you through a door to a small starting area. There is pool of water flanked by two islands, and on these islands are two mean looking dire wolves. Fortunately, they're chained to the far walls, but it looks

like their chains give them pretty much the full range of their islands and access to part of the channel in between. On the far side is an area similar to the one you're on.

Marilyssa points out a small rowboat, complete with oars, docked near your starting position. "I'm afraid this is all of the equipment you have to complete this scenario," she says, then looks at the wolves. "Look at them. They say that eons ago, creatures much like these became mankind's first pets, and that over the centuries their stock has given us the many breeds of dogs that we enjoy today. They're fascinating creatures, aren't they?"

When the whistle blows, Marilyssa describes the objective. "Your task is to maneuver past the dire wolves and make it safely to the far door. Please note that the wolves can reach you on their islands and in part of the channel between them. Good luck, and please, do be careful!"

The water is 10' deep on each end of the pool, but only 3' deep in the channel between the two wolves. The channel is 6' wide and 30' long. The rowboat is about 5' wide by 10' long, with two 5' long oars, and seats four. The entire area is lit with a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it to the finish area by the end of the 15-minute time limit.

Solution: The PCs get into the rowboat, row to the beginning of the channel, get out of the boat, flip it over their heads, and use it as a shield as they walk across the length of the channel. Once at the far end, they flip the boat over, get back in, and row to the finish area.

DM Notes: The dire wolves will attack anyone they can reach. If the PCs use the boat as a shield, they should stay toward the middle of the boat. The wolves can reach under and claw someone at the very front or very end of the overturned vessel. If the PCs have the swimming proficiency, they can swim to the finish once they've gotten past the wolves, or, if at least one PC can swim, he can shuttle back and forth, ferrying one PC through the water at a time.

A more dangerous way to approach this scenario is to take out one of the dire wolves. The PCs row to the beginning of the channel, then get out and climb onto one of the "islands." Then, holding the boat up in front of them like a shield (top facing the wolf), they walk towards one of the wolves. It will try to attack, at which point the PCs plop the rowboat on top of it (this requires an attack roll; use the best THAC0 of the PCs holding up the boat). Once this is done, one PC weighs down the boat by sprawling on it, pinning the wolf under the boat long enough for the other three to race across the island and jump into the water. Once they're safely in the water, the PC on the rowboat gets up and sprints to his friends. It will take the trapped dire wolf one round to extricate himself from under the rowboat, which will give the PC time to get clear. However, if the boat "attack" is unsuccessful or the PCs don't think about holding the boat down, the wolf is free to attack the PCs. If this occurs, Marilyssa immediately casts a *hold animal* spell on the wolf, and declares any PCs in the wolf's range as "dead" for the rest of the scenario.

Dire wolves: INT semi- (3); AL N; AC 6; MV 18; HD 4+4; hp 20 each; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4; SZ L (7' long); XP 175; *MM*/362.

Scenario #7: THORN STEW

After drying yourself out, you are met by Scarrolupio, the Guild wizard proctoring the next event. "I hope you're hungry," he says, "because this next scenario involves a big pot of stew." He leads you into an enormous room, where a gigantic pot simmers on a burning stack of tree trunks. The pot itself must be 25' tall. "It's an old frost giant recipe, called thorn stew. If you three wouldn't mind?" He motions for the wizard, priest, and rogue to enter a metal cage, 10 feet on all sides. Once inside, their hands are tied behind their backs with rope, and the cage is hoisted by a chain into position some 35 feet above the cooking pot. "Now then, as for your starting equipment," Scarrolupio says to the warrior, "here it is: a *rod of lordly might*—just the thing for a warrior true. Unfortunately, its charges have all expired, leaving only its mundane uses. Still, that should be more than enough to demonstrate your abilities as a true warrior! In addition, here is a *rope of constriction*; please be careful with it."

"Your friends have been captured by a frost giant, who will be back in 15 minutes to throw them into the pot of thorn stew. You have that long to get them back down here at ground level, and, if successful, will earn your warrior's ring."

The cage has a solid bottom and top, with bars along all four sides. Entrance is gained through a trap door on the top of the cage. The cage hangs from a chain through the ceiling at a height of 60 feet above the floor. The room is lit by the cooking fire and a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: 10 points per PC at ground level at the end of the 15 minutes. The warrior only receives his full 10 points if he manages to rescue at least one other PC.

Solution: The warrior presses button #4 on the *rod of lordly might*, extending the rod into a climbing ladder. Since it only extends up to 50 feet, he uses it to climb onto the lip of the cooking pot, then pulls the rod up and extends it to reach to the cage. He opens the trap door, unties his teammates (if they haven't done so already), and they all climb back down to the lip of the pot, and from there to the floor by means of the rod.

DM Notes: Standing on the rim of the cooking pot requires a Dexterity check at +2; a new roll is required each time the rim is stepped onto (in other words, once on the way up and once on the way down). If there is someone already on the rim to steady the character (on the way down only), a Dexterity check need not be made at all. Anyone falling into the stew plunges into a large pool of warm water; nonetheless, he is declared "dead" for the scenario since he was not only "boiled alive" but "pierced by thorns and nettles" as well. Similarly, a PC falling off the climbing ladder is immediately saved by a *feather fall* spell from Scarrolupio and is "dead."

The PCs in the cage can untie themselves or one another by any of the following methods: a successful rope use non-weapon proficiency roll (at –6), a successful escape non-weapon proficiency roll (see *The*

Complete Ninja's Handbook, pages 31 and 35–36) with no modifiers, or a successful Dexterity check at –10. Once one PC is successfully untied, he can easily untie the other two.

The trap door on the top of the cage cannot be reached from inside the cage and must be opened by the warrior from the outside.

The *rope of constriction* is not needed in this scenario and is best left alone. While it can be used as a normal 60' rope, it is quicker and more effective (not to mention safer!) to use the *rod of lordly might* as a climbing tool. Anyone foolish enough to grasp the rope and command it to do something will be immediately attacked by the rope, saved by Scarrolupio, and declared "dead" for the duration of this scenario. Note that warriors who fall into this predicament will no doubt strand their entire parties, and no one will receive any points.

If the warrior manages to save at least one of his teammates, he is given the warrior's ring. This ring will be worn in subsequent scenarios.

Scenario #8: HORNETS AT EVENS

You are met by a gentle-looking Adventurers' Guild priest. The man introduces himself as Father Quespin and leads you through a door into an oddly-shaped room. The center of the room appears to be a 30' diameter pit filled to the rim with gloppy mud. Extending from the pit are three small side-rooms. You are standing in one of these side-rooms, and you can see a closed chest in each of the other two. Directly across from you, between the other two rooms, is a narrow corridor.

Father Quespin gives you your equipment: two 10' wooden poles. Looking at your team's priest, he says, "You'll have an opportunity to earn your priest's ring during this scenario. It is in one of the two chests over there, and in the other is a *ring of spell storing* containing the spells *hold animal* and *giant insect*." Once the whistle blows, he gives you the task briefing for this scenario. "The areas containing the chests are designated "Evens" and "Odds." To determine which is which, you'll have to investigate the chests closely. I will tell you this, though: your priest ring is in the "Evens" chest, but inside the chest with it are four deadly hornets that kill with but a single sting. You must retrieve the priest ring from the "Evens" chest and must all four exit by way of the corridor."

The entire area of this scenario is lit by a *continual light* spell. The mud pool is 2' deep and quite safe. PCs may wade through the mud without penalty. The two chests are marked as follows:

Left Chest: $1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5 \div 6 \times 7 \div 2 \div 4 \div 5 \times 3 \times 7 \times 8 \times 0 + 16 - 4$

Right Chest: $8 \times 9 \times 3 \times 6 \div 6 \times 3 \times 11 \div 9 \times 18 \div 2 \times 7 \times 4 \times 0 \times 6 + 88 - 73$

Scoring: 10 points per PC who makes it to the corridor within the 15 minute time limit, as long as the priest's ring is recovered from the "Evens" chest. The priest receives only 5 points if he makes it to the corridor but isn't the one who recovers his ring. If the priest's ring is recovered but the priest later "dies" in the scenario, the full 10 points are awarded for any PCs who make it to the corridor in time.

Solution: The priest chooses one of the two chests, places a pole down between the area he's on and the area containing the chest he selected, and uses the other pole as a "walking stick" by placing it in the mud and leaning on it to balance himself. (The mud pit is a uniform 3' deep). Once at the chest, he reads the mathematical symbols carved there to determine whether the chest represents "Evens" or "Odds." If it's "Odds," he opens the chest and retrieves the *ring of spell storing*; if it's "Evens," he heads to the other chest. Once he has the *ring of spell storing*, he heads to the "Evens" chest, opens it, and casts the *giant insect* spell on the four hornets, who will then grow to giant size and obey his instructions. (The *giant insect* spell affords the priest limited control over the enlarged insects.) The priest holds the hornets at bay, gets his priest's ring, and all the PCs exit via the poles.

DM Notes: The secret to solving the mathematical equations quickly is to look toward the end of each. Each one has a "times zero" that allows the PC to ignore anything preceding it in the equation. The chest on the left is "Evens," the one on the right is "Odds."

While *giant insect* allows the spell-caster to control the insects, the spell *hold animal* has no effect on insects. One round after opening the "evens" chest, if the *giant insect* spell is not used, the hornets attack the PCs, starting with those closest to them. The hornets have had their stingers coated in red paint, which will leave tell-tale marks on anyone stung by them. Being stung by a hornet is grounds for being declared "dead" for this scenario—remember, one of the ground rules was that these hornets were able to kill with but a single sting (although this is not really the case). If the hornets attack, the PCs can always jump into the mud. The hornets will not enter the mud pit, nor will they attack anyone entirely coated in mud (although it's certainly a messy way to save some points in the contest).

If the priest gets his priest's ring, he may wear it in later scenarios.

Scenario #9: SPACE & POST

Father Quespin sends you through a door at the end of the corridor. There you find a small room where you can clean off the mud. You are soon met by Mercurio, the Guild wizard in charge of the next scenario. He asks you to choose among yourselves a single volunteer but does not say why he needs one or what the volunteer must do.

A volunteer chosen, Mercurio leads you an enclosure outdoors. The area is divided by an 18'-wide gap that looks bottomless. Right in the middle of this open space is a post capped with an upright metal ring that can swivel around. The top of the pole is 6' higher than the level of the floor. Mercurio hands you two 10' poles. You notice that one is made of wood, one of metal, and that the metal one has a knob

on it the size of a fist. He also shows you a sealed wooden crate, about 1' × 1' × 2', with rope handles on the ends. Then he departs the room with the volunteer, and they shortly reappear on the other side of the area, on the far side of the pit. To the volunteer he gives a pair of *slippers of spider climbing.*

Once the whistle sounds, Mercurio reads the task briefing. "The object of this scenario is for you three to cross over to the same side as your partner. Furthermore, you must bring the crate of medical supplies with you. Good luck!"

This scenario is open to the sky, although there are walls to prevent outsiders from peering in. The gap is 18' wide, and the post is about 2' thick, leaving eight feet on either side.

Scoring: 10 points per PC on the far side of the pit at the end of the 15-minute time limit, as long as the small crate made it there successfully as well. If the crate isn't there, only 5 points per PC on the far side of the pit are awarded. The volunteer receives his points only if he manages to get at least one other team member to his side in time.

Solution: The three PCs put the metal pole through the ring on top of the post and push it all the way through with the wooden pole. The volunteer puts on the slippers, grabs the pole, and climbs over to the post. There, he swivels the ring so that the metal pole is facing his three partners. One PC grabs it, and the volunteer swivels it over to his side, and the PC jumps off. This process continues with the other two PCs, and during one of the trips the crate is looped over the pole by one of its rope handles and transferred to the other side in that fashion. Once all three PCs are at the far side, the volunteer swivels the pole to the far side and climbs back along the pole to meet his teammates.

DM Notes: If there are any short PCs on the team (gnomes, halflings, or dwarves), it might be a good idea to have them go across the pit first; that way, they can be boosted up to the pole by their partners. If the volunteer is one of the "short" races, it might be necessary to throw the crate across the pit so that he has something to stand on in order to reach the pole. Throwing the crate across the pit requires a Strength check, with a failure indicating that the throw was short, and the crate goes down into the pit. (The pit is really only 10' deep and covered with soft sand—it's only "bottomless" courtesy of one of the Adventurers' Guild's illusions). If the last PC across is short and needs the crate to stand on, he can loop the rope handle around his foot and transport it across the pit that way.

Scenario #10: REUSE RAT BOWEL

At last, the final scenario! You are met by the last of the proctors, a Guild priest named Lydric. He hands you a score sheet showing your score so far but refuses to answer questions about how it compares to those of other teams. "You've had some strange goals during these scenarios: making your way to a rune-marked stool, measuring a pig's belly, and so on. Well, here's where all of your hard work pays off. This time, your goal is clear: you seek buried treasure."

Lydric directs your attention to the floor of the room. It is covered with metal plates, each plate a 3' square adorned with four indentations, one in each corner. There are 225 plates in all. "The indentations are there for a reason," states Lydric. "You must each fit the face of your ring into one of the indentations, turn it one-quarter turn, and lift. Only in this fashion can the plates be lifted. Here, try it with this one."

You notice the plate in the northwest corner of the room is marked with an "X." After passing rings out to any who didn't earn theirs in the scenarios, Lydric has you lift up that plate using the rings. Underneath the plate is a hollow space. "This space is empty," says the priest. "The same holds true of all of the other spaces under all of the other plates—except one. That one holds a trophy. You find it, you keep it. You have everything you need, except for the one vital piece of equipment. You,"—here he points to the team member holding the scoresheet—"what is the name of this final event? That's right, 'Reuse Rat Bowel.' You'll need a rat bowel, which I hereby provide for you." With that, Lydric reaches inside his robes and pulls out a small jar filled with what are, apparently, rat intestines.

"The plate marked "X" represents the start of this scenario," he says. "I realize you cannot all fit on it, so I'll ask one of you to stand on the "X," and the others to stand nearby."

The final starting whistle blows. Lydric says, "You now have everything you need to locate the buried treasure. It is situated under one of the 225 squares in this room. Your task is to jointly decide which one you need open with your rings. You only get one chance, and you must all four use your rings at the same time on a single plate in order to lift it. Happy hunting!"

This room is lit by a *continual light* spell.

Scoring: Each PC earns 10 points if the buried treasure is found within the time limit. That means the team either earns 40 points or none at all!

Solution: The key to this scenario is not the rat bowel, but rather the scoresheet. Each scenario name is an anagram that directs the PCs to the buried treasure. Written out in order, they read as follows:

CAFE	FACE
SEAT	EAST
TOW	TWO
PESTS	STEPS
OR DWARF	FORWARD
RUNT	TURN
GIRTH	RIGHT
NET	TEN
DAN	AND
THERE	THREE
CAPES	PACES
SHOUT	SOUTH
EON	ONE
PETS	STEP
THORN	NORTH
STEW	WEST
HORNETS AT	NORTHEAST
EVENS	SEVEN

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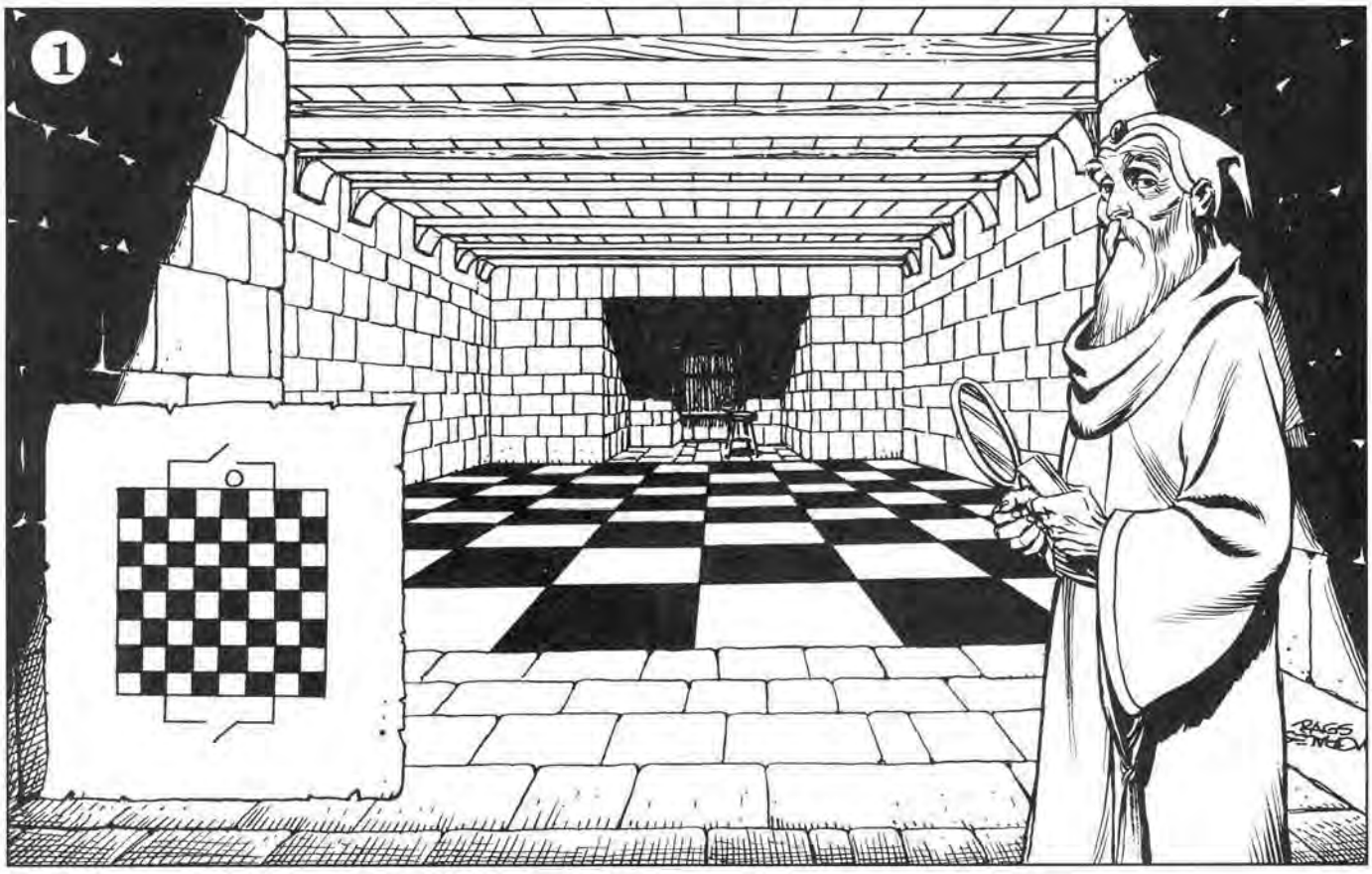

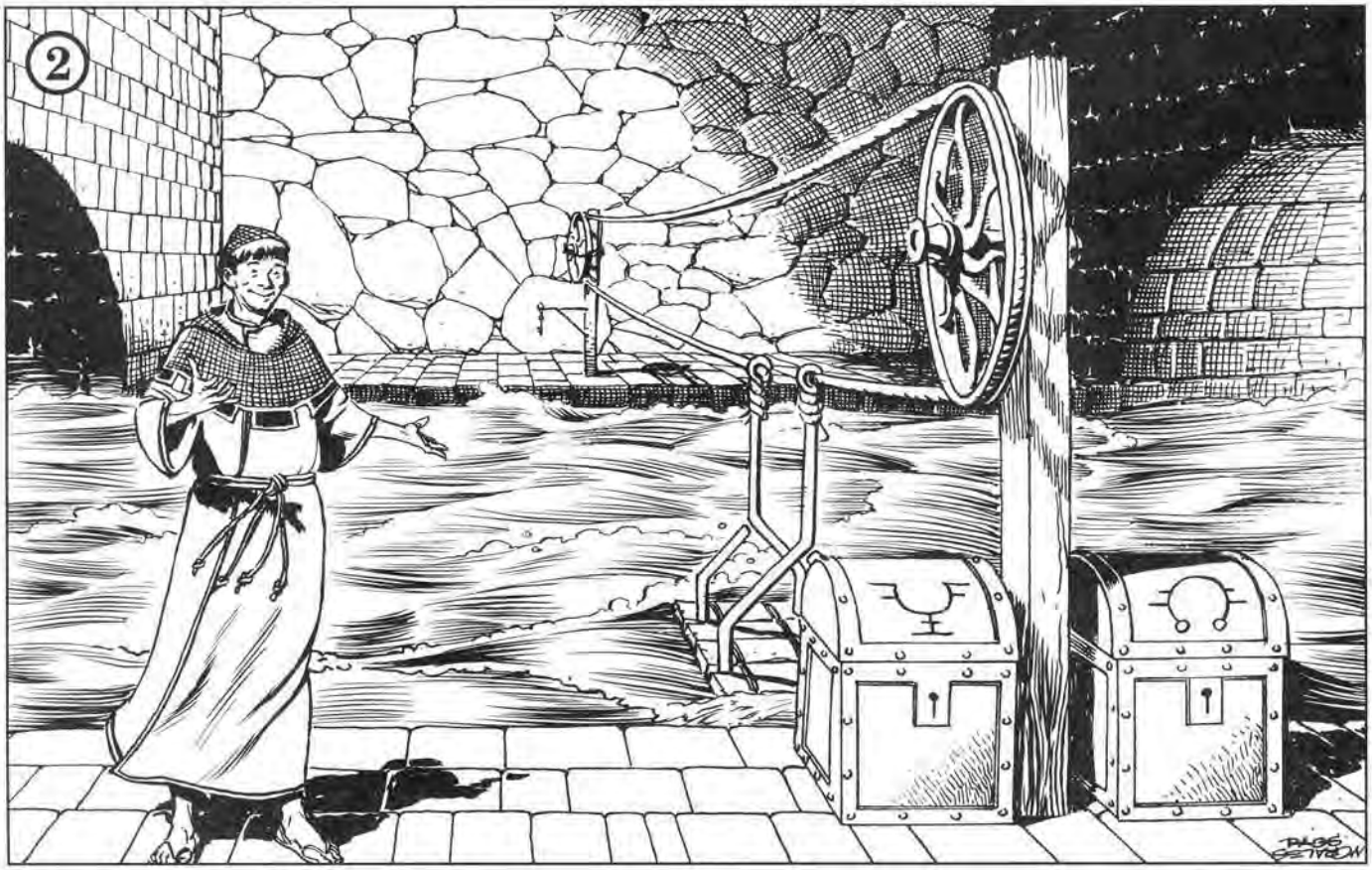

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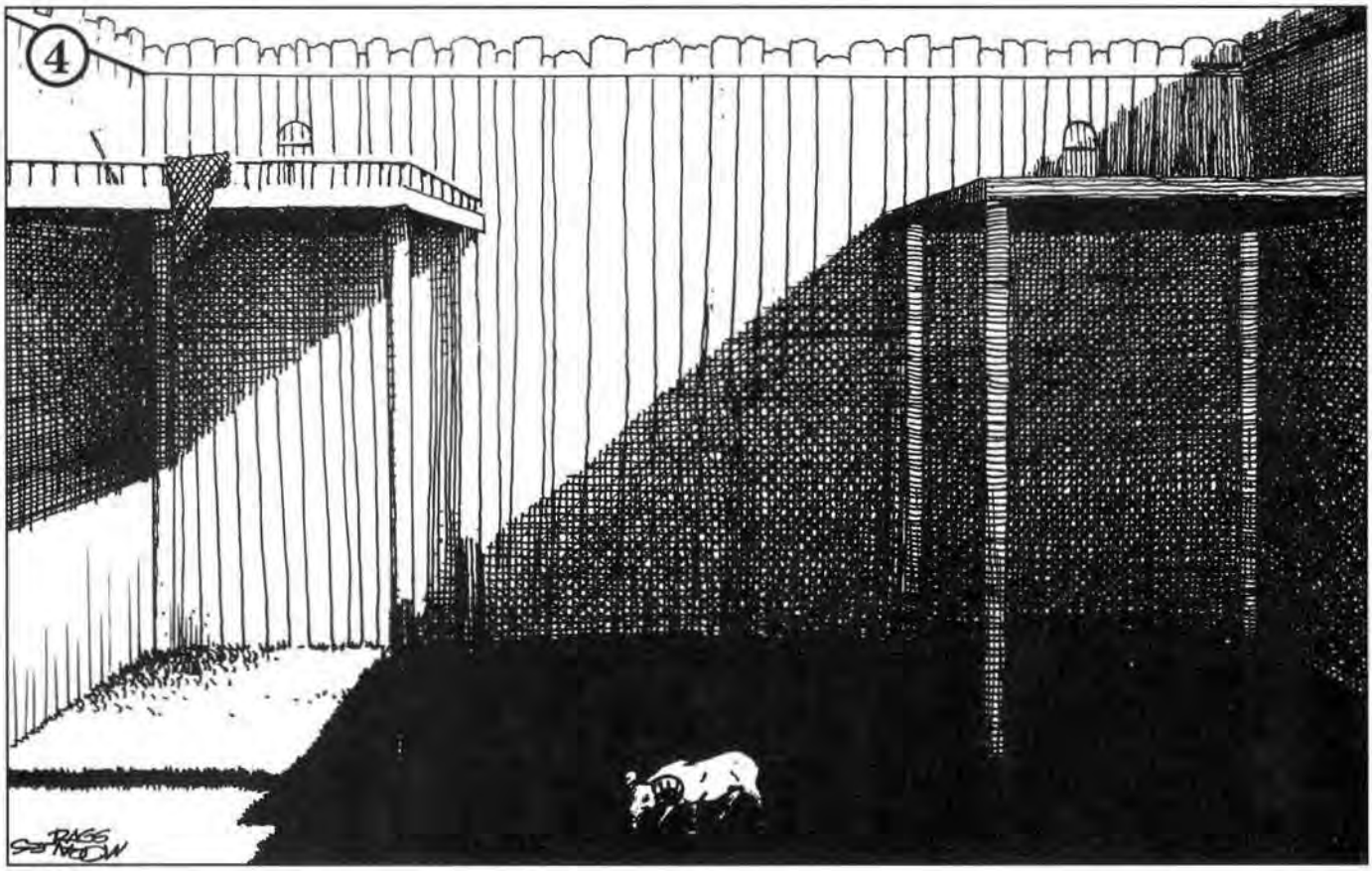

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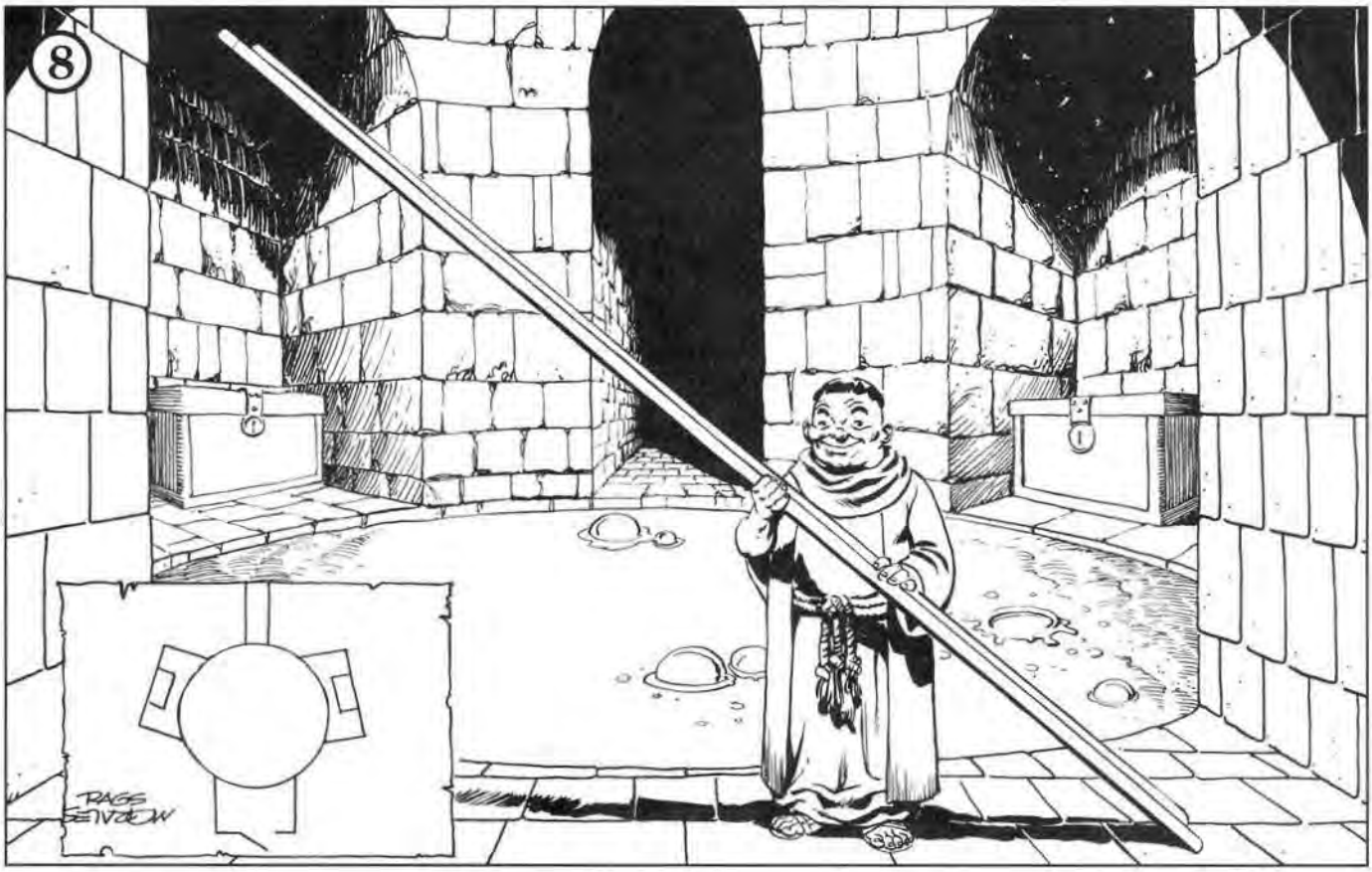


SPACE	PACES
& POST	& STOP
REUSE RAT	TREASURE
BOWEL	BELOW

Starting on the "X" and following the hidden instructions, the PCs are led to the correct square (eight spaces east and five spaces south of the "X").

The trophy is 2' tall with a silver sprite on top. (The sprite has become a tradition, a carry-over from last year's "gem sprite" trophy.) If the trophy is located in time, the PCs may take it with them.

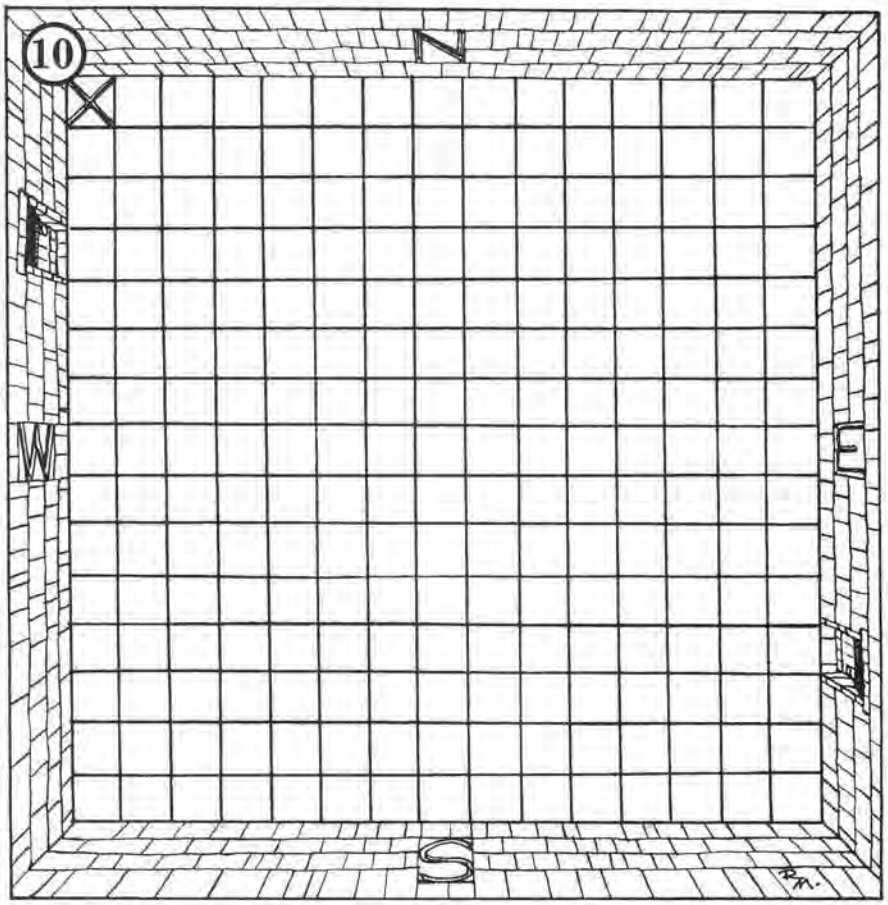
The Noblemen's Scheme

One of the teams entered in the contest is a group of four noblemen who call themselves, quite originally, the Noblemen. These braggarts were more or less dared by a group of their noblemen friends to enter the contest and prove their worth. They agreed and are now having second thoughts about the whole idea, realizing that if they do poorly, they'll look foolish.

When they were randomly drawn to be the last team to go through the scenarios, a little math led them to the realization that, with 18 teams entered, there will be teams finishing all ten scenarios before they even start the first one.

With that in mind, the Noblemen came up with a quick plan. They hired a rogue from the crowd to find out from one of the first few teams what challenges the scenarios held, feeling that with the deck so stacked in their favor, they couldn't help but win. The human rogue, Rangard, has been given 50 gp to accomplish this mission, with another 50 gp waiting for him if he's successful.

Rangard's plan is to approach the teams as they finish the last scenario and try to pass himself off as a bard. According to him, as part of the celebration afterwards, there's to be a bardic contest to decide who can come up with the best song describing the day's events. Of course, if he could find out the details of each scenario before the contest officially ended, he'd have that much of a head start in composing his verses on the other bards in the contest. He's willing to make it worth the competitors' time by paying them for the information. (He'll start out by offering a mere 20 gp for the information but reluctantly goes as high as 50 gp.)



Rangard approached teams #1 and #2 in turn and tried his story, but got nowhere. As the PCs exit the tent, he approaches and tries his luck with them. This is another opportunity for roleplaying in this adventure, and this one could have enormous results on the outcome of the contest. If the PCs fall for Rangard's ploy, the Noblemen win the Challenge of Champions with a perfect score, taking away not only the trophy but the first-place prizes in each of the four character class categories.

If the PCs decline to help Rangard, he tries to get the information from other groups. Unless he's detained or bribed, there's a 40% chance he'll get the information he wants, enabling the Noblemen to win the contest.

Rangard: AL N; AC 7 (Dexterity); MV 12; T2; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; D 17; ML 9; XP 35; PP 45%, OL 15%, F/RT 25%, MS 35%, HS 30%, CW 65%, RL 0%; dagger, pouch containing 50 gp.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs have finished all ten of the scenarios, their scores are tallied, both as individuals and as a team. To compare the results of the other teams, consult **Tables 1** and **2**. In the event of a tie between two or more participants in a single class, the winners are ranked in order of their team's overall scores.

PCs who earned their rings in the course of the contest may keep them. Further, the top three winners of each PC class have their rings etched by a *wizard mark* spell—"1st," "2nd," or "3rd," as appropriate, to show their rankings among the contestants. Each ring is worth 1 gp, perhaps more to a collector of such things. They are non-magical. The winning teams' members also each receive a "silver sprite" trophy identical to the one in the last scenario, engraved with their names, their team name, "Challenge of Champions II," along with the Adventurers' Guild crest. Its value is about 50 gp. Finally, the

Table 1: Team Results (by scenario)

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Noblemen*	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	400
Blademasters	40	40	40	35	40	30	40	25	40	40	370
Amazons	40	40	40	35	30	30	40	30	40	40	365
Merry Elves	30	40	40	40	30	40	40	25	40	40	365
Dragonfighters	40	40	40	35	30	40	30	35	30	40	360
Knightmares**	30	40	30	40	20	40	40	30	40	40	350
Brackenton's Elite	30	40	40	0	40	30	40	35	30	40	325
Team Pegasus**	30	30	40	40	10	40	40	20	30	40	320
Tristan's Troubleshooters	30	40	30	0	40	30	30	35	40	40	315
Beerguzzlers**	30	40	40	0	20	30	30	40	30	40	300
Southdale's Finest	40	40	30	0	40	40	30	40	40	0	300
Bisquayne's Army	40	40	30	40	0	30	20	30	30	0	260
Noblemen*	30	40	30	0	0	0	40	30	20	40	230
Green Menace	40	40	30	0	0	40	20	20	30	0	220
Brawlers**	30	40	40	0	10	0	20	20	15	0	175
Grunthogs**	30	40	40	0	0	0	0	30	30	0	170
Longshots	20	30	0	0	0	0	0	30	20	0	100
Four Who Roar**	20	20	0	0	0	0	0	10	20	0	70

* The Noblemen are listed twice; the top score is used only if the PCs fall for Rangard's ploy (see "The Noblemen's Scheme" for details). Otherwise, use their lower score.

** These teams participated in the betting pool on the side.

members of the winning team also receive a lifetime membership in the Adventurers' Guild.

After the challenge, you meet the members of the teams that finished ahead of you. They press you for information, trying to measure their success against yours. Every 15 minutes, another team finishes, and the questions begin anew.

A Guild representative reminds you that you are free to roam about the area until all of the contestants have finished the contest. Vendors of all types sell their wares from their carts, and there are Guild exhibits set up in tents all along the way. You are warned not to discuss the specifics of the scenarios with any but other competitors who have likewise finished; after all, there are still a few teams waiting to begin the first scenario.

At long last, all the teams make it through the scenarios, and everyone is ushered outside to a waiting audience, eager to hear the results of the contest. The contestants are arranged in a semicircle around a wooden platform. Up to the platform steps Farthingale, the rotund Guildmaster of the Adventurers' Guild. He praises the prowess of this year's competitors and begins the awards ceremony. Finally, the overall winning team is announced. As Farthingale calls the team up to the stand, the audience applauds loudly. Four "silver sprite" trophies are passed out to the winning teammates, and congratulations are made all around.

There are many less tangible benefits to having participated in this year's Challenge of Champions. Since the Adventurers' Guild keeps records on everyone who enters the contest, those who did particularly well may be asked to join future Guild expeditions. The Guild is always looking for an extra adventurer able to pull his or her own weight. In addition, some of the other competitors may very well end up as close friends or possibly even party members as a result of their meeting with the PCs during the contest.

Once the tournament winners are declared, the contest officially ends and the celebration begins in earnest. Vast amounts of food and drink are consumed, musicians and entertainers are kept busy until the wee hours of the night, and the Thieves Guild is kept hard at work overseeing the payment of bets.

Amid the carousing, Farthingale may be overheard commenting to one of his associates, "Whew! It's going to be difficult to top this one for next year!" Ω

Table 2: Individual Scores (by scenario)

Team	Wizard	Warrior	Priest	Rogue
Noblemen*	100*	100*	100*	100*
Blademasters	**95**	**90**	**95**	90
Amazons	90	**90**	90	**95**
Merry Elves	90	**90**	**95**	90
Dragonfighters	**95**	80	**95**	90
Knightmares	90	**90**	90	80
Brackenton's Elite	80	80	85	80
Team Pegasus	70	80	90	80
Tristan's Troubleshooters	90	70	85	70
Beerguzzlers	80	70	70	80
Southdale's Finest	80	80	70	70
Bisquayne's New Army	50	80	70	60
Noblemen*	50*	70*	50*	60*
Green Menace	60	50	60	50
Brawlers	20	65	45	45
Grunthogs	40	50	40	40
Longshots	20	30	20	30
Four Who Roar	20	10	20	20

*The Noblemen are listed twice; the top score is used only if the PCs fall for Rangard's ploy (see "The Noblemen's Scheme" for details). Otherwise, use their lower score.

Numbers in **bold** indicate the top scores (assuming the Noblemen's scheme doesn't work).

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
WELL, CONGATULATIONS TO YOU FOUR! NEVER BEFORE HAS A PARTY SCORED ZERO POINTS IN EVERY EVENT!
DESPITE YOUR LACK OF ANY POSITIVE OUTCOME, THE GUILD WOULD LIKE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT YOUR STRATEGY...
NAMELY, HAVING YEAGAR THE WARRIOR HURL YOUR HENCHMAN-LOOKING "ROGUE" AT EVERY OBSTACLE WHILE ARTAX THE WIZARD YELLS, "KILL HIM, NOT US!!"
FORCE OF HABIT.
I OBJECTED TO THIS PLAN!
ME, TOO!

SIDE TREKS

BY CHRISTOPHER POMEROY

Artwork and Cartography by Diesel

"Stumping the Party" is an AD&D® adventure designed for 3–6 PCs of levels 3–5 (about 16 total levels). The adventure works best as a subplot introduced to PCs while they are journeying through a forest. The module is designed for any combination of classes, although it would be helpful if one or more characters have the ability to combat poison.

For the Players

> Traveling through the forest, you find yourselves walking alongside a creek bed. Around noon, you smell a rancid odor issuing from a low embankment. After pushing aside some shrubbery, you find the source of the stench.
>
> Caught in a shallow of gravel and tree roots lies the shriveled carcass of a horse. Paper-thin flesh clings to its yellowed bones, and shrunken eyes stare morbidly at the sunny sky. Casual observation, however, yields no clue to how the creature reached such an emaciated state.

For the DM

The horse was part of a hunting party led by the son of a minor noble living in a nearby settlement. Unfortunately, the hunting party was caught in the trap of an ettercap who lives in the forest. After the horse had been cocooned and drained of its blood, the ettercap dropped it into a nearby waterway where it drifted until the shallows caught it. If the PCs state that they are investigating the animal's carcass closely, have each player make an Intelligence check with a –4 penalty to the roll. A successful roll indicates that one or more PCs notice a series of fang-like marks on the corpse. However, even if they fail this roll, they still notice a distinctive brand on the horse's flank: a shield cut diagonally by two black bars. PCs who make a successful heraldry roll recognize the symbol as belonging to local gentility, specifically the House of Ostray (a wealthy merchant family living in a city three days' hence).

The Trap

Two days later, near twilight, the party notices a trail of smoke coming from the northwest. The heaviness of the smoke makes it unlikely that it stems from a campfire, but the smell of it—at least to PCs knowledgeable in woodlore—does not suggest a forest fire. Curious PCs can follow the smoke to its origins atop a nearby wooded hill:

> You follow the trail of smoke to the top of the forested hill. At its summit you find a roughly circular clearing lined by ancient knobby oaks, in the center of which is a large, rotted stump. The source of the fume—a merchant wagon on fire—lies in shambles on the opposite side of the clearing. There is no sign of the wagon's owners or their horses.

The party has stumbled into an ettercap's lair. The burning merchant wagon is only a trick to lure unwary travelers. It is not, in fact, on fire. Instead, the ettercap has placed it on top of a smouldering fire pit. The wagon has holes bored through it so it appears to be smoking. Observant PCs who make an Intelligence check with a –5 penalty notice that the wood is not actually aflame. More seriously, each pair of trees surrounding the clearing has a trip wire strung between them. Any character entering has a 4 in 6 chance (roll of 1–4 on a 1d6) of tripping the wire, causing a thick web wall to drop between each tree, completing encircling the clearing. If no one snags a wire, the ettercap's spiders set off the trap once one or more of the PCs are trapped inside. Ideally, some characters should be trapped inside, some outside, and some in the web walls.

STUMPING THE PARTY

The First Battle

When the wire is tripped, read or paraphrase the following.

> It isn't until you hear what sounds like a rope whirring around a nearby tree that you notice a thin trip wire against which your left foot has pushed. Suddenly, a wall of semi-translucent material drops between the two nearest trees. Then, in a clockwise pattern, more white walls begin to fall between the thick oaks that encircle the clearing. Each wall looks like a huge web.

Each character has until the count of five (counted silently by the DM) to decide to out-distance the cascading walls, either to enter the clearing or to escape it. Players must make an Intelligence check with a –3 penalty to notice an open path, then make a Dexterity check to clear it. If a player makes the first and not the second, he becomes stuck in the web wall.

If PCs look upward for another escape route read this:

> Looking up, you see that the entire clearing is covered in the same web-like substance of the walls. You also notice some shadows scurrying among the white threads and in the tree boughs.

Someone with a sharp weapon can cut completely through a web wall in four rounds if unmolested, six if distracted. Anyone stuck in a web must subtract his Strength from 19 to determine the number of rounds needed to escape. Each character helping helping to free the trapped PC reduces that time by half (minimum 1 round). Until then, the trapped PC suffers a +4 AC penalty.

Two rounds after the ettercap springs its trap, the characters are attacked.

Ettercap: INT low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 5; hp 22; THAC0 15; #AT 3; DM 1–3/1–3/1–8 + poison (save vs. poison for die in 1–4 turns); SZ M; ML 13; XP 650; *MM*/114.

The ettercap is a hunched, 6' tall creature with black eyes, body-length arms, and mottled gray skin spotted with tufts of thick, wiry, black hair. His speech is characterized by high-pitched chattering and earsplitting shrieks.

During the battle, characters notice the ettercap wearing a ragged, red mantle (he was attracted to the garment's color) emblazoned with the same coat of arms as was found on the horse's corpse two days prior.

Large spiders (12): INT non-; AL N; AC 8; MV 5, Wb 15; HD 1+1; hp 5 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1; SA poison (Type A; save at +2); SZ S; ML 7; XP 175; *MM*/326.

The spiders do the bulk of the initial attacking, waiting for characters to approach the web walls, relying on their mobility on the webs to attack and get away if need be. The ettercap avoids much of this, occasionally exiting his lair in the stump to bite any distracted or trapped prey. However, as soon as he is attacked, the ettercap scurries up a wall to the canopy ceiling and drops 20 feet into the stump. He plans to save his strength for the ambush later.

All remaining spiders (and the ettercap) retreat to the web lair in a cave beneath the stump if they sustain casualties of 50% or more.

The Stump

Characters might decide to pursue the ettercap, if not for the mere adventure of it, then to discover the fate of the unlucky noble whose trail they've unwittingly hit upon. The ettercap built his lair in a large cave beneath the hollow stump. The lair is a collection of 4' diameter tunnels and chambers built of web material, complete with traps and secret passages. Characters can travel through most of the passages and chambers (see below).

Navigating the Web Lair

Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs decide to shine a light down into the ettercap's lair:

> Beneath the hollow stump is a 5' high tubular corridor consisting of springy, tacky webbing. There seems to be openings at either end of the corridor. Occasionally, you think you see shadows on the other side of the web walls.

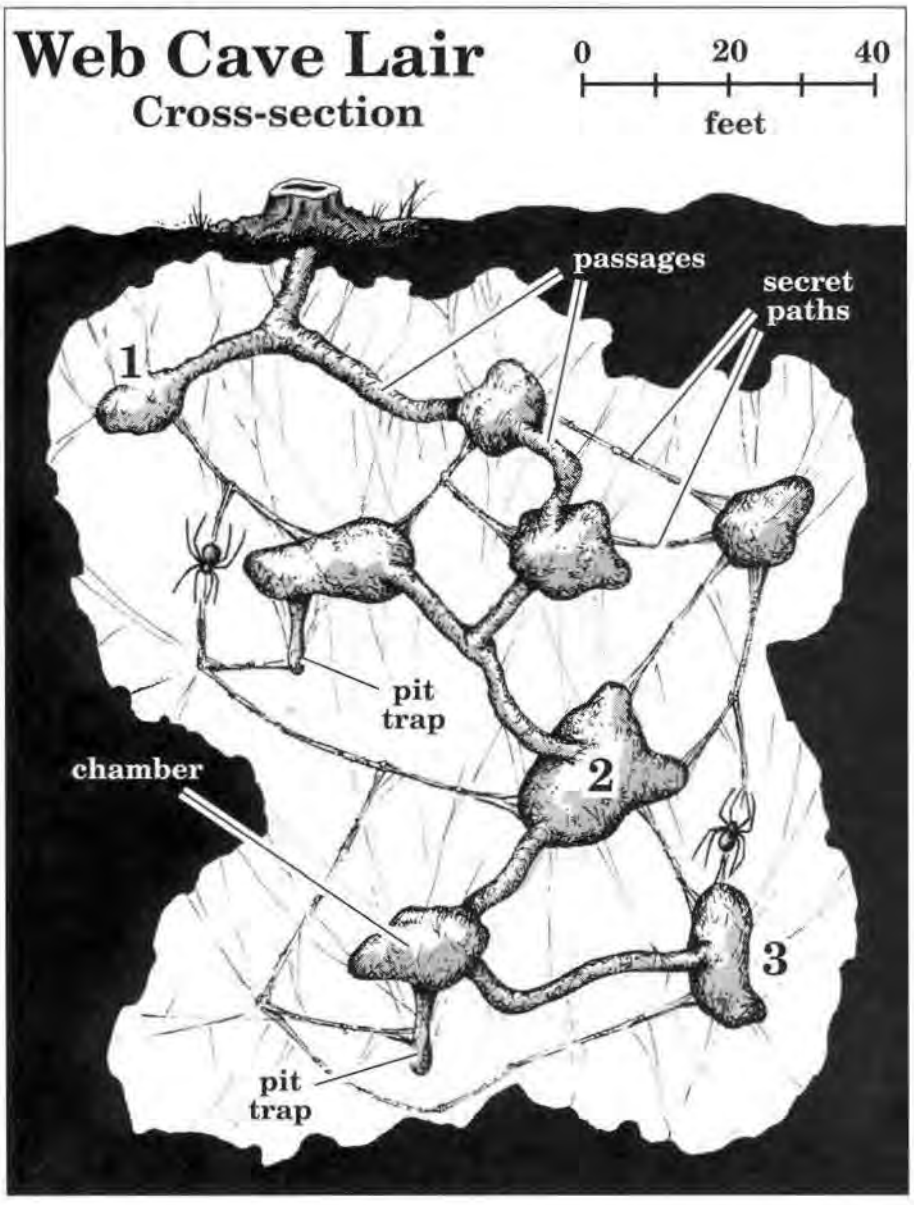
Because of sticky footing, movement is one-third normal. The tunnels also have the elasticity of a bedspring, so characters have a 1-in-6 chance of falling each round during combat. Fallen characters take 1d2 rounds to get to their feet due to the adhesive surface. Open flame has a 1 in 6 chance each turn of setting the place ablaze, inflicting 1–6 hp fire damage to PCs in the first round and 2–12 hp in consecutive rounds (the extra damage accounting for smoke inhalation.

Most of the passages are straight up and down or angled. However, ropes aren't needed to navigate the lair because the walls are sticky and membranous, and the passages are quite narrow. Characters can navigate them like clumsy spiders. For purposes of this module, *spider climb* negates all movement difficulties.

The secret tunnels are especially sticky and difficult to navigate; any character attempting to crawl along one of these narrow passages must save vs. paralyzation or become stuck for 1–4 rounds. The ettercap and his minions use the 3' diameter sticky passages for ambushes and hidden movement. Entrances to them are treated as concealed doors for detection purposes.

Encounter Key

Some of the chambers have hidden pit traps devised by the ettercap to capture victims for easy biting. Any character rolling 1–4 on a 1d6 triggers the pit he is walking on. The unlucky adventurer falls through a false top into a web tube that closes around him. (Calculate the normal web escape time and multiply that by 3. Only one other character may help free a snared PC.) After 1–3 rounds



of entrapment, the ettercap (40%) or one of his spiders (60%) comes and bites the snared PC from a secret passage. The bite automatically hits.

1. Refuse. Characters carefully searching this room find a pile of discarded items from past victims. Included are several saddles (one of which holds a 100-gp gem), rotting rations, and a flask of wine.

2. Ambush. At the bottom of this low-bellied chamber rests an iron-bound chest half covered with wisps of webbing.

Unwary intruders are in for a surprise. The ettercap and the surviving spiders are waiting in adjacent secret pathways, ready to pounce. Camouflaged lasso traps also fill the room. Any character entering the chamber has a 1–2 chance (on 1d6) of becoming snared by a hidden lasso. Trapped PCs are wrung around the neck, sustaining 1–6 hp damage per round until the victim suffocates (in 4 rounds) or cuts himself free. Each lasso can withstand 8 hp damage before severing. Hanging characters suffer a +2 AC penalty while snared. The iron chest is empty.

3. Cocoon Room.

> Hanging from thin web threads affixed to the ceiling are three cocoons. One is wiggling. You can hear a muffled yell from within it.

Two surviving members of an unlucky merchant caravan are found here, as well as the withered corpse of a drow thief whom the ettercap was afraid to drain because of the relationship between drow and Lolth, the demon queen of spiders. It takes five rounds each to free them from their cocoons. The men, Garion Ostray (an 18-year-old with a quick wit and familial ties to the House of Ostray) and Del Vantrus (the young noble's best friend), are weak from dehydration and lack of food. They cannot walk without assistance.

On the drow corpse—which is mostly skeletal save for a few scraps of leathery flesh—the characters find leather armor, a long sword, a spider-shaped holy symbol of Lolth, a gold ring (worth 150 gp), a pouch containing 24 pp, five *arrows +1* (+2 vs. dwarvenkind) and an unused poison antidote in a small, blue glass vial (one draught only; cures all known poison types).

Garion Ostray (human fighter): AL NG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; F1; hp 6 (1 currently); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 15, C 11, I 13, W 10, Ch 14; ML 8; XP 250 (for rescuing only); unarmed.

Del Vantrus (halfling thief): AL NG; AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 12; T1; hp 4 (1 currently); THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with thrown weapons; S 10, D 16, C 9, I 13, W 11, Ch 12; ML 7; XP 250 (for rescuing only); PP 30%, OL 30%, FRT 20%, MS 30%, HS 30%, DN 20%, CW 55%, RL –5%; unarmed.

Concluding the Adventure

The exhausted men ask the party to escort them home (three days away), promising a reward of 100 gp per character. Naturally, Garion's father will be grateful. Unfortunately, Garion's father is only a minor lord on the frontier and does not possess great wealth. He offers the paltry sum of 200 gp (total) and the undying gratitude of an elder lord. Ω

A restless dragon guards the fabled Halls of the Sleeping Legion.

SLEEP OF AGES

BY ERIC L. BOYD

Heroes and tyrants

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz
Cartography by Craig Zipse

Eric works as a software design engineer and has authored or co-authored several TSR gaming products, including Powers & Pantheons *and the upcoming* Demihuman Deities. *He also writes a long-running column in* POLYHEDRON® Newszine.

"Sleep of Ages" is set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign in the realms of the South described in the *Lands of Intrigue* and *Empires of the Shining Sea* accessories. It is appropriate for five to seven characters of levels 5–8 (minimum 35 total levels). Although not required, both the above-mentioned boxed sets and the sourcebook *I, Tyrant* would be useful in staging this adventure. *The Complete Psionics Handbook* is necessary to make the most of the talents of an important NPCs, although suggestions are given for converting those psionic powers into innate magical abilities. This adventure is particularly appropriate for characters based in the recently reunified kingdom of Tethyr, and it can easily serve as springboard for an extended campaign along that nation's southeastern frontier set against the backdrop of the rising tide of war with the city-state of Mintar.

Adventure Background

Unbeknownst to the humans of the South, the beholders of the western Lake of Steam region are all descendants of a single hive mother whose spelljammer crashed in the Alimir mountains over three millennia ago. Nations ruled by eye tyrants and beholder cultists have arisen and collapsed countless times in the region ever since in a never-ending cycle of conflict. During the Third Age of Calimshan, after centuries of attacks by the beholder nations of the Lake of Steam on the Caltazar Hills—the southern territories of fallen Iltkazar south of the River Ith (then known as the Wurlur), the armies of Calimshan swept the eye tyrants and their minions from the Almraiven Peninsula in a decades-long series of wars that stretched from –1280 DR to –1080 DR. Over the next twelve centuries, the cities of the Lake of Steam drifted from the grip of Calimport's pashas and then gradually fell under the hegemony of

the surviving descendants of the Alimir Hive once again.

One of the earliest major conflicts in Tethyr's history occurred over fifteen centuries ago during the reign of King Silvam, second king of Tethyr, when the reconstituted beholder city-states strove to expand their territory once again. The Eye Tyrant Wars were fought from the Year of Many Eyes (–170 DR) to the Year of Seven Loves Lost (–166 DR) and pitted the allied armies of Calimshan, Mir, Iltkazar, and Tethyr against the eye tyrants and their armies. Many of Tethyr's finest warriors fell during the Eye Tyrant Wars, and the beholders were defeated once again only at great cost to the human nations to the west.

If not for the valor of the Knights of the Crescent Moon, an order of Tethyrian and Iltkazarn human and dwarven warrior-priests dedicated to Selûne and Clanggedin Silverbeard, all of Iltkazar and much of eastern Tethyr and Calimshan might have fallen to the eye tyrants and their vassals. The Order of the Crescent Moon, whose members were also known as the Axe-Brothers and the Brothers of Earth and Sky, was founded in the Year of Stonerising (–200 DR). Its membership included both the dwarven descendants of a proud warrior tradition dating back to the height of High Shanatar (an ancient dwarven realm that spanned lands of modern day Amn, Tethyr, and Calimshan) and lunatic Selûnite crusaders who worshiped at the Seven Stars stone circle south of Zazesspur in the Purple Marches. The order was created by Lady of the Seven Silver Stars Elhanna Moonhawk, a prominent priestess of Selûne of the time, and her dwarven mate, First Axe Therlarn Axesong, after the unlikely pair jointly received a divine vision from both Selûne and Clanggedin Silverbeard. The Moonmaiden and the Father of Battle warned of the burgeoning threat on the western shores of the Lake of Steam and bade the duo to unite their separate faiths into an elite fighting force well-prepared for the coming conflict. When the Eye Tyrant wars began, the Knights of the Crescent Moon stood ready. The order's ranks included over 1,000 elite warrior-priests trained in battle tactics versus the spheres of many eyes, and its armories were crammed with a wide variety of magical items designed for use in battle with the beholders.

After their victory in the Battle of Eyesvale, the allied forces of the four kingdoms disbanded and any thoughts of long-term alliances were quickly forgotten. Although the Knights of the Crescent Moon had been cited repeatedly for their crucial role and valorous conduct in the wars, within a few decades they were viewed with suspicion by the nobilities of both Tethyr and Iltkazar as well as the clergies of Selûne and Clanggedin due to their supposedly divided loyalties. Ninety-one years after the order's most triumphant victory, the loss of a crucial political battle waged in the courts of Tethyr and Iltkazar heralded the imminent dissolution of the Knights of the Crescent Moon.

Shortly after the order's crushing political defeat, Lord Knight Commander Bryth Moonaxe, the half-dwarven son of the late Lady Moonhawk and Therlarn Axesong, journeyed eastward to consult the Oracle of the Deepwash concerning the order's long-term survival. Bryth received a cryptic prophecy that heralded the disbanding of the Axe-Brothers, but the vision he received also predicted that the order would rise again to face their ancient foes. Upon the Lord Knight Commander's return, the entire order retreated to their remote mountain chapter-house and within a matter of days publicly announced their immediate demobilization and disbanding. In truth, those who wished to leave the order were honorably discharged and magically compelled never to reveal the truth, while those who chose to remain prepared to go into a centuries-long slumber. After a rockslide (deliberately induced by the order's siege engineers) buried the disbanded order's isolated redoubt in the Year of Leather Shields (–75 DR), the Knights of the Crescent Moon quickly faded into history and were largely forgotten.

In the aftermath of the Eye Tyrant Wars, many thought the power of the beholders in the western Lake of Steam region forever broken. Instead, the surviving eye tyrants of the Alimir Hive immediately began rebuilding their numbers once again, vowing revenge and eventual victory. Fortunately for the other races of the region, the Alimir Hive has been riven by factionalism ever since, and its successes have been few and far between. In the Year of the Long Watch (1230 DR), an ambitious beholder known as Vaxall of the Dying Gaze allied itself with Jhaniloth Puiral, a lich and senior member of the secretive Twisted Rune. Under the tutelage of its undead mistress, Vaxall learned many of the secrets of wizardry while becoming an Elder Orb. Since Jhaniloth's death in the Year of the Marching Moon (1330 DR) at the hands of Crown-Prince Rythan of Tethyr, Vaxall has slowly reforged the beholders of the region into a loose alliance and instigated a far-reaching plan to carve a powerful nation on the western shores of the Lake of Steam.

The first overt step of Vaxall's plan was begun in the aftermath of the Time of Troubles. With the fall of Bane, many of the Lord of Strife's priests dreaded the thought of serving Cyric, the Dark Sun. In the guise of a young eye tyrant (employing *polymorph self* spells) under the assumed name of Xavlal, Vaxall approached a mid-ranking Banite of exceptional promise named Teldorn Darkhope and offered an alliance between the group of beholders it claimed to speak for and an elite core of promising ex-Banites led by Teldorn. Together, the priest and the ancient eye tyrant (in its guise as Xavlal) forged a plan to seize power in the city-state of Mintar on the western shores of the Lake of Steam. With the nearly bloodless collapse of that city-state's decadent sultan's reign in the Year of the Helm (1362 DR), Teldorn and his followers turned their energies toward creating an unholy army of helmed horrors (by means of the *doom of Bane* incantations) and mercenaries, each bound by *dark promise* spells. (The *doom of Bane* and *dark promise* are priest spells detailed in *Faiths & Avatars*.) The first target of the Mintaran armies was the desolate Tethyrian town of Kzelter, which fell in the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), as did the long-lost armory of magical weapons hidden beneath the city's streets.

After routing the unprepared Tethyrian defenders, the Knights of the Black Gauntlet refortified the ancient Kzeltern Fortress and consolidated their power while the newly alarmed armies of Tethyr regrouped at Ithal Pass.

The Knights of the Black Gauntlet stopped their advance for several reasons, including difficulties in locating the lost armory beneath Kzelter and a reluctance on the part of their secret beholder allies to overextend themselves beyond their ancestral lands. The most important reason, unbeknownst to anyone save the Elder Orb, was that Vaxall suspected an ancient enemy lay in the way of its ambitions. During its studies, Vaxall had discovered a reference to a "Sleeping Legion" in the writings of the long-vanished Oracle of the Deepwash. The context of the reference suggested that ancient enemies of the eye tyrants still defended the human kingdoms to the west and that an army of holy knights would rise again to do battle on the fields of fallen Iltkazar if the beholders attempted to push west beyond the Iltkazar Range. Fearing that the seer's vision might herald the defeat of its ambitions, the Elder Orb chose to wait until it learned more of its prophesied foes.

The catalyst for the unfolding of the ancient oracle's prophecy is a mild-mannered gnome scholar. A trained archeologist and military historian, Artides the Finder has long been interested in the ancient conflicts of the South. With the recent restoration of Tethyr's monarchy, the gnome's noble patrons in Waterdeep finally judged it safe enough to finance an expedition. In late spring of the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), Artides accompanied a well-financed merchants' caravan from the City of Splendors to the great libraries of Candlekeep where he continued his investigation into the fate of a long-forgotten military order: the Brothers of the Earth and Sky.

While ensconced among the forest of tomes, the diminutive historian managed to deduce the likely location of the Axe-Brother's chapter house after several weeks of study, confirming his own hypotheses. During this period, Artides became acquainted with the noted Calishite scholar, Reft al-Fohjin, who was well-versed in the lore of the Orb Marches.

Artides and al-Fohjin traveled together to Faerntarn late in the month of Tarsakh, arriving in time for the convening of the Monarch's Greencourt. Although the court was consumed with talk of Amn's two rebel cities, Riatavin and Trailstone, Artides managed to wrangle a brief audience with the king and permission to mount an exploratory expedition into the Omlarandin Mountains on the basis of his Calishite companion's character recommendation. The gnome then parted company with the Calishite sage and continued on alone to the city of Saradush.

Tethyr's fourth-largest city was once the seat of the kingdom's bureaucracy, and its vaults still hold most of Tethyr's written historical records. Throughout the long summer of 1370 DR, Artides pored through dusty tomes in dim vaults seeking the final clues he lacked, unconcerned by reports of war to the southeast. Not until the first of Eleint did Artides find what he was looking for. The diminutive historian used most of his remaining funds to hire a small band of mercenaries for protection, and he then proceeded east into the Omlarandin range in search of the lost chapter-house.

During the gnome's sojourn in Saradush, his endeavors attracted the attention of Vaxall's network of agents. The Elder Orb had the gnome watched for several months, and, when Artides and his bodyguards left the city, Vaxall's minions were waiting in ambush. The elder eye tyrant dispatched his elite team of vassals—nearly a dozen helmed horrors and a flameskull—to intercept the unsuspecting scholar and force him to lead the armored company to the long-lost stronghold. Despite the best laid plans of battle horrors and beholders, while the gnome's overmatched mercenaries were slaughtered by the Doom Brigade, Artides managed to escape unscathed. Unwilling to accept defeat despite the serious setback, the gnome continued onward into the heart of the Omlarandins in hopes of validating his months of study. As the gnome seemed unaware that the ambush was more than common brigandism, Vaxall changed tactics and directed his vassals to pursue closely without alerting the historian to their presence until his destination was reached.

For the Dungeon Master

The adventure begins when the PCs begin to chase after the gnome and his armored pursuers. One method of beginning the adventure is to have the PCs recruited by the Calishite scholar Reft al-Fohjin, a friend of the newly crowned king of Tethyr who contributed greatly to the monarch's ongoing project—the *Historia Tethyra*, to investigate rumored foul play against the sage's recent traveling companion. If the PCs agree, Reft has them teleported to the Omlarandin foothills to the scene of the ambush begin their search. (See "In the Foothills" below.) Alternatively, the PCs may already be in Saradush when the adventure begins. After one of the bodyguards left for dead by the Doom Brigade manages to return to Saradush and contact the city guard, the PCs are recruited by Lord Mayor Tanithe Beyross (NG hm F0) to investigate the fate of the engaging scholar who had forged many friendships among Saradush's most erudite and influential citizens during the long summer. Finally, the PCs may simply be adventuring in the wild regions of eastern Tethyr when they stumble across evidence of a massacre of a company of trained warriors. If they study the scene, they might conclude that at least one survivor—probably a gnome or a halfling—escaped the initial ambush but is being pursued by the ambushers. Assuming the PCs investigate, they are drawn into a long-forgotten prophecy of death and rebirth.

Regardless of how or why the PCs pick up the trail, they must follow in the wake of the dogged historian and the company of armored warriors who are apparently pursuing him. During their travel through the mountains, the PCs may have several encounters that lead them to believe something deeper is amiss, but the significance of their incipient adventure should not yet be clear.

When the PCs finally reach the site of the buried Chapel of the Blooded Moon, they discover that both the survivor of the ambush and

the pursuing company have apparently penetrated its catacombs. If the PCs continue their pursuit, they soon find themselves trapped in a battle between the minions of Vaxall, who have finally captured Artides, and a militant sapphire dragon and its gargoyle servitors who seek to protect the Sleeping Legion. The PCs must defeat Elder Orb's troops, rescue Artides the Finder, save the warrior-priests of the Sleeping Legion from destruction, convince the sapphire dragon that his charges are once again needed to defend Tethyr from the beholders of the Lake of Steam, and survive the process to bring word to Tethyr of the true evil that menaces its southeastern flank.

In the Foothills

This wooded glen in the foothills of the Omlarandin Mountains was recently transformed into a bloody battlefield, and two dozen corpses of slain fighting men still line the narrow vale. Before they stumbled into this deadly ambush from which only their employer escaped, the fallen warriors were mercenaries hired by Artides the Finder for protection. The Doom Brigade attacked with complete surprise from the tangled heights above both sides of the creek-side trail. The ambush was initiated with the assistance of Vaxall's eye powers and Skullpyr's spells and quickly turned into a lopsided melee when the horrors charged into combat. Artides managed to sneak away in the resulting fray thanks to his small stature, the blessings of Tymora, and the deliberate efforts of the Doom Brigade not to target him for attack. Vaxall's minions managed to prevail after a few rounds of combat, but not until the gnome had made good his escape. It then took the Doom Brigade an extended period of time to recover the diminutive scholar's trail and resume their pursuit into the mountain range.

Depending upon the length of time between the battle and the PCs arrival, the difficulty of determining exactly what occurred at the site of the ambush should increase proportionately. Regardless of the length of the interval, however, the PCs should be able to determine the following:

- three columns of fire incinerated everything (including one or two corpses per column) in a 10' diameter circle (Skullpyr's *flame strikes*);
- A 40' diameter, roughly circular area was pounded by great hail stones (Skullpyr's *ice storm*);
- At least two corpses have been cleanly cleaved in two, with one half of the body totally absent from the field of battle (Vaxall's *disintegrate* ray);
- One corpse was transformed into stone and shattered (Vaxall's *flesh to stone* ray combined with his *telekinesis* ray);
- The attackers seem to have left few tracks on the ground; those that they did leave seem to suggest they weighed little (less than fifty pounds) but were shod in metal boots; they seem to have levitated over small obstacles. They did leave a few other signs of their passage such as broken branches, dislodged stones, and sword swathes through the brush (helmed horrors can *levitate* or *fly* if they choose);
- At least one gnome, halfling, or humanoid of similar stature was a member of the ambushed company, and, of the losing group, only his tracks lead away from the battle, spaced to suggest he was dodging and running.

If the PCs follow the gnome's tracks, they will find that he seems to have lost his pursuers within a sixteenth of a mile of the ambush site where his trail vanishes. However, if the PCs follow the tracks of the attackers, who also seem to have searched for the gnome's trail, they meet up with the gnome's tracks a mile or two away from the site of the ambush.

Omlarandin Mountains

The Omlarandin Mountains just barely meet the criteria to fit the name, as they are barely higher than the foothills and rolling highlands that surround them. A few isolated mounts rise higher than the others, but all of them are lightly forested with no exposed peaks. The smallest of the clusters of mountains that form the Iltkazar range, the Omlarandins have also been the most populated mountains in Tethyr since the time of Iltkazar.

Wilderness Encounters

While among the peaks of the Omlarandin range, the PCs should have some or all of the following encounters. While the DM chooses which encounters the PCs experience, these "random" events will impact the rest of the adventure and should probably occur at some point prior to the PCs' discovery of the buried Chapel of the Blooded Moon. In addition, the DM should feel free to add any additional random encounters desired that are appropriate for a relatively low, temperate mountain range set in the southern Realms.

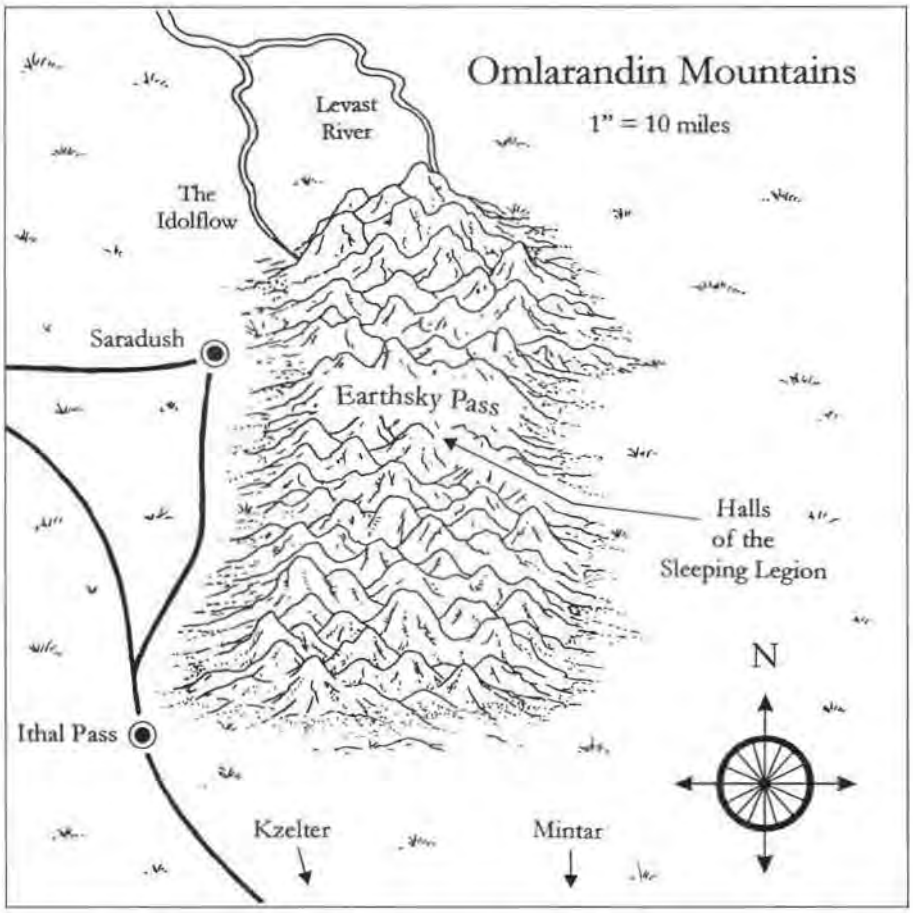
1. Wrath of the Omlarcats. The Omlarandin Mountains are home to one of the largest populations of displacer beasts in Faerûn, known locally as omlarcats. While the great cats usually hunt small game in the higher mountains, they sometimes come down to hunt the local sheep herds south of Saradush. Omlarcats are only truly dangerous in the autumn mating season and the following spring when their young are born, but they are always highly protective of their territory.

Gauntlet and the Doom Brigade hunted down a displacer beast pack during their exploration of the mountain range. The horrors managed to kill one cub and drive off the remainder of the pack without serious injury.

As the PCs proceed towards the Chapel of the Blooded Moon, they stumble across the site of the battle. In the center of a small clearing they find the skinned corpse of a great cat with six legs. (Gauntlet removed the hide and tentacles, so unless one of the PCs is familiar with displacer beast physiology, it is unlikely the adventurers will know what to expect.) Lurking in the shadows of the surrounding terrain is the rest of the displacer beast pack.

If the PCs stop and investigate the bloodied corpse, the rest of the pack leaps out from the rocks and plants they were using as ground cover and immediately attacks. The monsters are particularly enraged, concentrating their attacks on any humaniform figure in shiny armor.

These displacer beasts have no treasure.



Displacer beasts (3): INT semi (4); AL LE; AC 4; MV 15; HD 6; hp 29, 28, 24; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2d4/2d4; SD displacement; save as F12 with +2 to their die rolls; SZ L; ML 14; XP 975; *MM*/56.

2. Howling Moon. When the moon rises late one evening amidst the mountains east of Saradush, every PC on guard duty hears a lonesome howling from a nearby rise. If anyone moves to investigate, they observe a solitary canine atop the shadowed tor. The animal resembles a large, dark gray wolf hound with a slightly human-like head, amber eyes, and adaptable forepaws, giving it a very intelligent look.

The Howling Hound, as this moon dog is known in the Realms, is a divine minion of Selûne, goddess of the moon. Its appearance is hardly coincidental—it has manifested in the vicinity of the PCs at the bequest of the Moonmaiden and is one of the Three Signs of the Awakening, described below. Assuming the PCs approach to within 50 yards, it telepathically communicates a cryptic phrase—"*Ages end and eyes reopen; herald the crescent moon.*"—before returning to the Outer Planes.

The Howling Hound might reappear at later time during the course of this adventure if the DM feels the PCs need its assistance. In that case, assume the moon dog has been trailing them from the Border Ethereal, and that it reappears at their time of greatest need to provide healing (one *cure light wounds* per PC) and *cure disease, slow poison*, and *dispel magic* spells if needed. Selûne's minion does not appear more than once, and it does not engage in battle unless attacked, as significant intervention in the unfolding events by Selûne, Clanggedin Silverbeard, or their minions might prompt countermeasures by the dark powers who back the Knights of the Black Gauntlet.

Moon dog: INT exceptional (16); AL N; AC 0; MV 30, bipedal 9; HD 9+3; hp 49; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 3d4 (bite); SA bay, howl, bark, and whine; spell-like powers; –3 to opponent's surprise rolls; SD shadowy *hypnotic pattern*; +2 weapons to hit; never surprised; immune to *fear* spells; spell-like powers; +2 to saving throws (takes half or quarter damage); MR 25%; SZ M (3' at shoulder); ML 18; XP 9,000; *MM*/58.

The following spell-like powers (at 12th-level of use) are available to the moon dog one at a time, once per round, at will: *change self* 3/day; *cure disease* 1/individual/day; *cure light wounds* (by lick) 1/individual/day; *dancing lights; darkness 15' radius; detect evil**; *detect invisibility**; *detect magic**; *detect snares & pits**; *improved invisibility; light; mirror image*, 3/day; *non-detection; shades* 1/day; *slow poison*, by lick, 1/individual/day; *wall of fog*.

Spells marked with an asterisk are always active.

Moon dogs can become ethereal and have the ability to travel in the Ethereal and Astral planes at will. Their superior vision (double normal vision, 60' infravision) coupled with their keen sense of smell and hearing enable them to detect all illusions. Association with a moon dog for one hour or more removes charms and acts as a *remove curse*.

3. Mountain Shepherd. As the PCs travel through the mountains, they come across a herd of giant sheep in a wide, lightly wooded mountain valley. In the center of the valley is a great boulder over forty feet in diameter with a large flattened region at the top. Sitting atop the great rock is a young, male mountain giant named Grug whose stale reek can be detected several hundred feet downwind. He is clothed in a motley collection of hides, and his skin is reddish brown. He has straight black hair that hangs limply on his shoulders and a full beard.

The mountain giant's right leg hangs off the side of the boulder, and his left leg is bent so that his heel touches his buttocks and his knee rises into the air. Grug's left hand rests on his left thigh, and his right hand holds up a massive club balanced on the rock face. A large pile of hefty rocks is neatly stacked behind and to the left of the giant. In a large

sack kept close at hand, Grug stores a cask of ale, a great wheel of sharp, robust Arabellan cheddar cheese, three nearly spherical rocks (each 1' diameter), a "pretty pebble" (a *luckstone*), and 1,462 Amnian danters (gold pieces).

If the PCs approach within 100 yards of the giant or any part of his flock, Grug immediately stands up and hefts a couple of boulders for immediate use. Before attacking he calls out in Common to warn the interlopers away from his herd and, if they continue to approach, lobs one or two obviously deliberate misses in their expected path. If the PCs foolishly attack the giant shepherd or his flock, Grug defends himself and his sheep. Grug does not leave the valley unless he is severely wounded. If anyone attacks his herd or him and escapes his wrath, Grug summons a pack of monsters to help him hunt down the PCs. If the PCs attempt to parley in good faith, however, Grug yells for them to sheath their weapons and approach, but he does not descend from his perch.

Grug is a member of a mountain giant tribe that dwells in the mountains and the neighboring Kuldin Peaks. He spends most of his days alone with his herd in this mountain vale, and he is somewhat friendlier and more trusting than many of his kin. The somewhat lonely giant shepherd was greeted kindly by Artides as he passed through the valley several days ago, and the gnome invited the giant shepherd to join him in a brief lunch. The repast stretched for hours as the inquisitive scholar inquired extensively about Grug's lifestyle, and the two parted as unlikely friends. When Gauntlet and the Doom Brigade followed in the scholar's wake two days later, Grug was initially relieved that they made no move to molest his sheep. Several hours later, it occurred to the giant that passers-by in his valley were extremely rare, and that the company of armored knights might be pursuing his newfound friend. Although this thought bothered the giant, he could not risk abandoning his herd to investigate.

Under no circumstances does the mountain giant leave his flock unattended or move beyond the perimeter of his flock. If the PCs seem receptive to acting as the giant's "agents," Grug describes the gnomish scholar (the same sage that the PCs are already tracking) and the company of armored knights who followed in his wake two days later. He did not get a great look at the knights, and he describes them as "ten shiny little folk with sharp shiny sticks." (Grug miscounted their numbers by one, and he did not notice Skullpyr.)

Grug (mountain giant): INT average (9); AL CN; AC 4; MV 12; HD 15+3; hp 76; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+10 (fist) or 4d10+10 (huge club); SA hurl rocks (2d10 hp damage); SD catch boulders 30% of the time; SZ H (14' tall); ML 15; XP 7,000; *MM*/143.

Grug attacks in a straightforward manner and prefer to find a high, unassailable spot from which to throw lots of boulders.

Grug can hurl boulders up to a maximum range of 200 yards. He can also summon and control other monsters. Summoning takes a full turn to perform, and 1d6 hours pass before the creatures appear. A summoning results in either 1d10+5 ogres (70%), 1d6+3 trolls (20%) or 1d4 hill giants (10%); Grug can not control what type of creature responds to his summons. Summoned creatures are under the loose control of the giant and stay until killed, sent away, or another summoning is made.

Giant sheep (40): INT animal (1); AL N; AC 7; MV 12; HD 4; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA charge for 2d4 hp damage; SZ L; ML 3; XP 120; *MM*/243 (modified).

Earthsky Pass

Earthsky Pass is a steeply-sloped, heavily wooded vale located deep in the heart of the Omlarandin Mountains. Twin streams wind down narrow canyons to join at the northern extent of the valley floor, and the combined flow meanders through the vale until it exits out the southern end of the pass. Upstream of the fork, between the two creek beds, lies a rubble-strewn hillside, the site of an ancient avalanche of mud and rock beneath which the order's redoubt was entombed. In the intervening centuries since the landslide, the valley has reverted to a natural state, and little trace of its former inhabitants remains.

A recently excavated cave descends sharply (40° angle) into the earth from the base of the hill, but no piles of dirt or stone can be found outside or within the subterranean passage.

Scattered around the entrance are the corpses of eight large humanoids. Most of the flesh has been gnawed from their bones, and recently. Careful inspection might reveal (if a successful Intelligence check is made) that some of the bones have been partially evaporated (as if struck by a disintegration ray). One of the unmolested bodies is actually a petrified humanoid creature that was subsequently shattered.

The only sentient inhabitants of the pass are a small community of sedentary alaghi—omnivorous, forest-dwelling cousins of the yeti. Scattered groups of alaghi roam the temperate mountain forests of the Omlarandin range foraging for food, and some, like this group, have established semi-permanent communities in particularly plentiful regions. Sedentary alaghi live much like primitive humans, but they tend to be greedy and are quite capable of depleting the resources around them to the point where their communities must resort to raiding to survive.

Led by a venerable elder, these short, barrel-chested humanoids with almost invisible necks and wide, flat heads reside in a series of four shallow caves high above the valley floor. While the alaghi have yet to disrupt the surrounding ecosystem significantly, they do not hesitate to slay and eat unwary travelers in their midst. However, the alaghi's ranks were recently decimated by the Doom Brigade when the humanoids dared to investigate the company's diggings. As a result, the remaining members of the group are much more hesitant about attacking interlopers. In groups of two or three, the alaghi stalk anyone who enters the valley, but they only attack if they have a clear tactical advantage over their prey or if someone is so foolish as to disturb their caves or their young, who hide within the rough shelters. Standard tactics of the alaghi are to scatter and hide prior to combat. Thereafter, individuals come out of hiding one at a time to hurl missiles or melee while their fellows circle to the rear, moving silently. Note that only the alaghi

elder speaks the Common tongue—the rest of the clan speaks only their own language of hisses, hoots, and grunts.

This community of alaghi is so cut off from civilization that it has little in the way of valuable treasure. Nevertheless, the community's elder dug up a long-lost cache from a forgotten age in the back of his personal cave and now proudly keeps the chest among his personal belongings. In a small, unlocked brass coffer are seven chased silver wrist-bracers set with turquoises and sapphires. Crafted over a millennium ago by Tathtan dwarves, these distinctive pieces of jewelry were used as currency in the since-fallen kingdom of Tathtar to the east. Four of the bejeweled bracers found here are worth 200 gp each, and the other three are worth 500 gp apiece. Engraved on the bottom of the chest is the mark of Tathtar—twin overlapping T's representing the kingdom's name and its first capital, Tulhaspyr.

Alaghi, adult (5): INT low (6); AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 9; hp 46, 38, 37, 36, 28; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6 (fist) and 1d6+5 (stone hand axe) or 1d6+5 (wooden javelin); SD 80% chance to move silently; 75% chance to hide in natural surroundings; SZ L; ML 11; XP 2,000; *Monstrous Compendium® Annual, Volume III.*

Alaghi, young (2): INT low (6); AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 3; hp 13, 12; THAC0 17; #AT 2; Dmg 2d6 (fist); SD as adult alaghi (see above); SZ L; ML 11; XP 120; *MC Annual, Volume III.*

Alaghi, elder: INT high (13); AL N; AC 4; MV 12; HD 10; hp 39; THAC0 11; #AT 2; Dmg as adult alaghi (see above); SA spells; SD as adult alaghi (see above); SZ L; ML 12; XP 5,000; *MC Annual, Volume III.*

The alaghi elder can cast each of the following priest spells: *command, cure light wounds, detect snares & pits, entangle* (×2); *chant, goodberry, hold person, speak with animals, spiritual hammer; spike growth* (×2).

Halls of the Sleeping Legion

The Halls of the Sleeping Legion are composed of the catacombs beneath the ruined Chapel of the Blooded Moon, the tunnels dug by Bleucorundum, and a long-sealed connection to Deep Shanatar, one of the greatest dwarven kingdoms ever to rise in the Underdark of Faerûn. The Knights of the Crescent Moon have rested therein in a magical stasis for hundreds of years as they await their prophesied summons to do battle once again with the eye tyrants of the Lake of Steam region. The self-appointed guardian of the Sleeping Legion, the sapphire dragon Bleucorundum, stands watch over his unchanging charges and guards their vaults against all intruders.

For the first time in the dragon's centuries-long tour of duty, intruders have tunneled into the dusty vaults, and they have striven to destroy the slumbering followers of Selûne and Clanggedin Silverbeard while fighting a running battle with the Sapphire Sentinel and his gargoyle minions. Gauntlet, Skullpyr, the rest of the Doom Brigade, and their scholarly prisoner have been battling with Bleucorundum for several hours when the PCs arrive. The resulting three-way conflict will determine the fate of the Sleeping Legion and possibly the results of the looming conflict that threatens to engulf the region in war.

Adventuring in the Halls

The Halls of the Sleeping Legion are no longer a static environment with the introduction of the Doom Brigade and the PCs. Vaxall's forces, the dragon and his gargoyle minions, and the PCs all move about the Halls at varying speeds and with varying intentions. It is up to the DM to keep track of each group's position, current strength, and newfound knowledge, and incorporate those details into the unfolding events.

The descriptions of the various locations given below are current as of the PCs' arrival, and assume the following: The Doom Brigade tunneled into the earth (creating area **1**), collapsed part of the Western Upper Wyrmtunnel (area **10**), and broke through into one of the Vaults (area **2**). As Vaxall's minions proceeded to destroy the long-sleeping knights entombed within, Bleucorundum appeared at the western end of the chamber using his phase psionic ability and attacked with his breath weapon. The two groups battled for several minutes before the Doom Brigade managed to escape into the Hall of Wards. The only significant casualty of the first skirmish was the Doom Brigade's temporary loss of Vaxall's disintegration power thanks to the dragon's strategic employment of an *anti-magic shell*.

After the battle, Bleucorundum retreated into the Lower Wyrmtunnels to nurse his wounds, quaff some potions of *healing*, and assemble his wing of gargoyles. The Doom Brigade healed the damage by means of Skullpyr's *magic missiles* and determined that the only avenue open to them led into the Hall of Golems (area **12**). In the Hall of Golems, the Doom Brigade attempted to open one of the doors and were forced to defeat two of the guardian hammer golems in battle before pressing onward.

The initial placement of the Doom Brigade, Bleucorundum, and the gargoyles is left up to the DM, but the Tears of Selûne (area **16**) is suggested for Vaxall's minions and the Lower Wyrmtunnel (area **26**) is suggested for the dragon and its gargoyles.

By the time the PCs arrive, both the Doom Brigade and the dragon and his gargoyle minions have recovered their original strength. Despite a series of brief skirmishes, neither side has been seriously weakened beyond the loss of Vaxall's disintegration power.

Tactics

Bleucorundum seeks to protect the lives of his self-appointed charges and safeguard the Halls from further destruction. Bleucorundum is aware that while Skullpyr continues to heal the Doom Brigade, he is unable to inflict lasting damage on the helmed horrors, but he has been unable to destroy the flameskull while it is protected by the company of helmed horrors. The dragon is also painfully aware of the limited supply of healing potions available for his own use and the day-long interval needed to restore the gargoyles to full health. As a result, Bleucorundum is forced to husband his limited spell and psionic abilities. It is important to note that Bleucorundum's tunnels (areas **10**, **11**, and **26**) and lair (areas **27** and **28**) are only accessible by magic, psionics, or a significant amount of digging.

Initially, the naturally suspicious dragon assumes the PCs are allied with the Doom Brigade. However, Bleucorundum is willing to consider an alliance with the PCs if they demonstrate their good intentions. The dragon's immediate goal is the destruction of Skullpyr, and, toward that end, the dragon enlists the PCs. If the PCs destroy the flameskull, Bleucorundum tries to persuade them to destroy the rest of the Doom Brigade with his tactical assistance and support. The dragon is not a coward, but he does, to some extent, view the PCs as relatively expendable compared to his own self-imposed, long-term duty to safeguard the Sleeping Legion. (Bleucorundum is not aware of the knights' imminent awakening.)

The tactics of Vaxall and the Doom Brigade are also straightforward. Vaxall seeks the destruction of the Sleeping Legion first and foremost. The beholder's secondary priorities are to gather more information about the Halls, safeguard his minions, and destroy the dragon and anyone else (i.e., Artides and the PCs) before information about his own existence leaks back to Tethyr's rulers.

Gauntlet (the battle horror) and the rest of the Doom Brigade follow Vaxall's priorities to the best of their abilities, but they can only receive detailed orders from the Elder Orb when it contacts them by means of a *sending* spell (as it has already done after the battle in the Hall of Golems and before the PCs' arrival). Vaxall can communicate "Yes" or "No" answers to non-verbal questions by a pre-arranged pattern of telekinesis effects on small pebbles. The Doom Brigade's immediate objectives are to safeguard Skullpyr and locate the key needed to enter the other Sealed Vaults (areas **3–7** and **9**).

Vaxall is aware of the abilities of sapphire dragons, and it has correctly determined Bleucorundum's age category and corresponding powers. However, the Elder Orb has not yet determined all of the magic, psionic abilities, or spell abilities available to this particular wyrm. What he has determined has been communicated to Gauntlet. Vaxall is unlikely to physically appear in the Halls unless the Doom Brigade is both severely weakened and the Elder Orb feels it can appear and then quickly disappear without exposing itself to personal danger.

The Oracle's Prophecy

Centuries ago, the Oracle of the Deepwash prophesied that the Order of the Crescent Moon would fall, but the seer also foresaw the knights' rebirth to fight their ancient foes. The Oracle of the Deepwash foresaw Three Signs of Awakening that would herald the order's rebirth: a manifestation of Selûne, a manifestation of Clangeddin, and the appearance of a legion of beholders. By the time the PCs enter the Halls of the Sleeping Legion, the first component of the threefold prophecy should have already occurred, as described previously in the wilderness encounter with the Howling Hound. The remaining two components of the prophecy unfold within the Halls themselves: a manifestation of Clangeddin in the Hall of Battle (area **14**), and the release of a swarm of death kiss spawn in the Martial Hall (area **20**). If for some reason the PCs do not act so as to receive the Three Signs of Awakening, the DM should either create new signs (or rework the ones detailed below) so that the signs fall within the scope of the PCs' actions, or the DM should assume that this is not the time for the order to reawaken and the PCs have failed in their unsought quest.

The Tripartite Key

As important to the reawakening of the Sleeping Legion as the appearance of the Three Signs of Awakening is the PCs' discovery of the Tripartite Key. The three components of the key are needed to unlock the Crypt of Honor (area **9**), and thus complete the quest. The first component of the Tripartite Key is a miniature darksteel battle axe hidden in the Hall of Battle (area **14**), and the second component of the Tripartite Key is a miniature silver crescent moon, hidden in Chapel of the Crescent Moon (area **17**). The third and final component of the Tripartite Key is a "blood-eye" gem found within the body of the imprisoned death kiss in the Martial Hall (area **20**). When the three components of the Tripartite Key are placed within the appropriate impressions in the door to the Crypt of Honor (area **9**), the PCs will have guaranteed the order's reawakening. Note that it is not possible to assemble the Tripartite Key without receiving the Three Signs of Awakening.

Wards

Two long-lasting incantations still envelop most of the Halls with significant effects within the enclosed area. Both spells are centered in a small cavity beneath the floor of the northern end of the Hall of Wards (area **8**) and encompass a 180' radius sphere.

A *Phezult's sleep of ages* spell (see *ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA*™, Volume 4, pages 1251-1252) is responsible for the ages-long slumber of the Axe-Brothers. Creatures in stasis that are mentally contacted by magic or psionics while within the field do not respond, and the being contacting them is placed in stasis temporarily (awakening after 2d4 rounds) each time such contact is attempted. Living creatures entering the field after it has reached its full extent, even decades or centuries after the spell is cast, must save vs. spell to avoid falling into stasis. Creatures of 15 HD/level or greater receive a +3 bonus. Creatures of 11 to 14 HD/levels save at +2. Creatures with 11 HD/levels or less receive a modifier of +1. A new saving throw must be made each time a creature enters the stasis field, even if it has entered and been unaffected before, but each creature needs save only once per exposure to a particular *sleep of ages* stasis field. Creatures who are physically removed from such a field without being magically roused wake up by themselves 2d4 rounds after removal, with no ill effects; the casting of *dispel magic* awakens them instantly if cast upon them when they are outside the field. Physical means of awakening will not hurry the process. A creature taken out of a stasis field and then taken back in before awakening returns to stasis without becoming conscious. Bleucorundum is protected by the black sapphires set into his mithril circlet, as are the gargoyles and the Doom Brigade, who are not truly alive; are all immune to the stasis field's effect.

An *earthward* spell (cast at the 14th level of magic use) is responsible for the centuries-long inviolability of the sleeping knights' vaults, with the notable exceptions of the dragon and Vaxall's minions. The *earthward* spell is fully detailed in the "New Spells" sidebar.

Unless disrupted, both spells may have a significant impact on the flow of events within the Halls and the tactics of all parties. Only the Sapphire Sentinel has had the opportunity to test both wards, and thus only the dragon is fully aware of the wards restrictions and effects. The twin incantations essentially envelop both the Upper and Lower levels of the Halls of the Sleeping Legion.

Upper Level

1. Disintegrated Tunnel. A rough tunnel, recently disintegrated from the surrounding loose earth by the Doom Brigade and Vaxall working in concert, descends into the roots of the range on a steep incline (approximately a 45° angle). Any character who examines the tunnel and makes a successful Intelligence check notices that the walls and roof of the passage seem extremely unstable. Dwarves and anyone with proficiency in mining or engineering can determine immediately (without having to make any type of check) that the tunnel is newly constructed and structurally unsound, but that it is unlikely to collapse in the near future, at least until the next storm.

The tunnel, approximately 10 feet in diameter, descends for nearly 150 yards before reaching the cellars of the ruined chapter-house. Along its entire length, clumps of dirt and small rocks rain down on anyone passing through. While within the tunnel, movement up or down its length is reduced to ten feet per round. Anyone attempting to move faster must make a successful Dexterity check every round or lose his footing on the loose dirt, sliding further down the tunnel. Human-sized PCs slide 10–60 feet (1d6 × 10) before coming to a halt. Anyone taking a tumble is 40% likely to dislodge sufficient earth and stone on top of them to partially block the tunnel and inflict 1d6 hp damage on themselves and anyone else within 10 feet.

The base of the newly carved tunnel is in danger of complete collapse where it bisects a horizontal shaft dug long ago by Bleucorundum (area **10**). Both walls of the descending tunnel and much of the dragon's diggings have collapsed, narrowing the Doom Brigade's tunnel to mere three feet in width. Nearly twenty feet of digging through dangerously unstable earth (95% chance of collapse) would be necessary to reach the older tunnel in either direction. A few feet beyond the cave-in, the rough-hewn tunnel abruptly ends amidst the shattered masonry of an ancient wall.

2. Desecrated Vault. This ancient chamber stretches seventy feet in length and thirty feet in width. The frescoed, arched ceiling rises to height of twenty feet along the east-west axis from a height of eight feet along the north and south walls. Twenty-nine narrow granite biers, approximately three feet wide, six feet long, and four feet high, line the north, west, and south walls.

The recently hewn tunnel descending from the surface (area **1**) pierces the western wall of this chamber. The eastern passage leads to a stout ironwood door reinforced with bands of steel. Despite its obvious age, the portal still swings outward silently and smoothly on its recessed hinges. The granite door frame is constructed so as to prevent nearly any attempt to force the door from the far side. Careful inspection of the door's edge reveals a complicated series of locks that are apparently undone by pressing various parts of the complicated mosaic on the door's far side. See the description of the Hall of Wards (area **8**) for further details.

Despite the best efforts of this chamber's builders to provide an inviolable sanctuary that would protect the slumbering crusaders within, this ancient vault was desecrated by the Doom Brigade as they passed through into the rest of the complex. In addition to the random damage inflicted on the chamber's stone and plaster, every long-slumbering inhabitant of this vault was murdered while in stasis. Vaxall employed his petrification ray on each human or dwarf to turn them to stone, his *telekinesis* ray to lift up and then smash the newly-created statues on the floor in the center of the room, and, finally, his disintegration ray on the pile of shattered remnants. This carnage was supervened by a brief battle between the resident dragon and the Doom Brigade that scarred the floor in several locations and pulverized many of the remaining chunks of statuary.

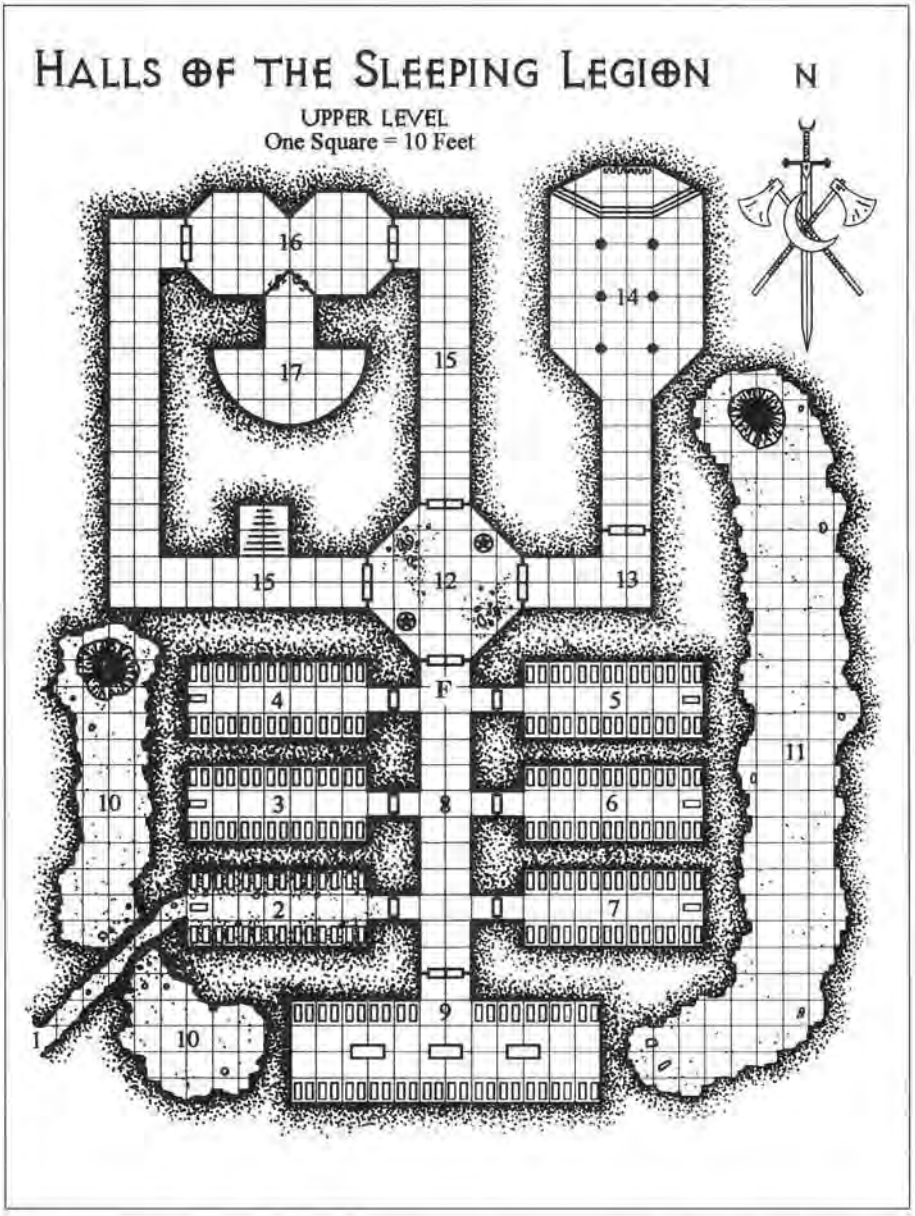
As a result, when the PCs arrive in this chamber, all that remains as evidence of the massacre are a few small chunks of stone that fell between the marble biers and thus were missed by Vaxall's disintegration ray. Close inspection of the remaining fragments reveals that the vast majority appear to be small pieces of shattered statues, particularly noses, fingers, hands, ears, scabbard tips, sword pommels, and other parts that would be likely to break off if a statue was dropped from a modest height. It should be obvious that most of the stone composing each statue is missing. Anyone who attempts to recreate what the statues used to look like can determine over the course of a half-hour or so, if a successful Intelligence check is made, that a single armored warrior or priest lay recumbent on each bier as if sleeping, with arms crossed across the chest and that each statue was uniquely carved and incredibly realistic. There is a 5% cumulative chance per searcher per hour that a piece of statue with a recognizable holy symbol of either Selûne or Clangeddin Silverbeard will be found. A successful religion proficiency check (Faerûnian or dwarven, respectively) or reasonable familiarity with the religion in question is necessary to identify either emblem. If the PCs realize that the shattered statues were once alive, it is sadly and immediately apparent that any attempt to *raise dead* or *speak with dead* is doomed to failure given the limited chunks of statuary remaining, even if a *stone to flesh* incantation is first employed.

3–7. Sealed Vaults. Like the desecrated vault (area **2**) described previously, each of these chambers serves as a sepulcher for the centuries-long slumber of its twenty-nine inhabitants. Unlike the grisly scene found in the first such chamber explored, these vaults remain sealed and unmolested.

Atop each bier lies a dwarven fighter-priest of the Father of Battle or a human crusader of Our Lady of Silver in the magical stasis induced by the *Phezult's sleep of ages* incantation. The body functions of each figure have virtually ceased, yet it is apparent that they still live and have not aged over the eons. While almost all the dwarves are male, the humans are equally divided between the two genders. Each figure lies atop a granite bier, is garbed in a open-faced helm and gleaming suit of mail, and clasps their favored weapon across their chest. None of the sleepers carries any magical items or treasure (aside from their non-magical armor), as their more valuable possessions were hidden elsewhere to reduce the danger of someone disturbing them in their helpless state.

8. Hall of Wards. This 125' long passage serves as the heart of the defensive mechanisms protecting the long-slumbering knights of the Sleeping Legion.

On each side of the hall are three ten-foot-wide and ten-foot-long passages that lead to the individual vaults. At the back of each alcove is a stout ironwood door, reinforced with bands of steel. Despite their obvious age, all the portals still swing into the Hall of Wards silently and smoothly on their recessed hinges. The stone frame supporting each door is constructed so as to prevent any attempt to force it open, and a complicated series of locks is built into each door where it is inaccessible to any lock pick and requires the casting of innumerable *knock* spells or use of similar magics to undo. In addition, each set of locks is unique, so carefully study of the locking mechanism of the door to the Desecrated Vault (area **2**) will not facilitate the sundering of any of the portals to the Sealed Vaults (areas **3–7**). In the center of each door is an intricate mosaic of inlaid precious stones depicting the intertwined symbols of Selûne and Clangeddin that compose the order's emblem. Only by pressing the individual stones that compose the mosaic in a sequence that includes several hundred such actions can each door be unlocked. Only Bryth Moonaxe, the Lord Knight Commander of the Order of the Crescent Moon (see area **9**) knows the proper sequence. Every failed attempt to press the individual pieces of the tiles in the correct order triggers a *symbol of hopelessness* (as the eighth level wizard spell, cast at the 18th level of magic use) five seconds after the attempt is completed.



The double doors at the northern end of the Hall of Wards, although of similar construction to those leading to the adjoining vaults, are unlocked and unmarked by any design. The matching pair of doors at the southern end of the Hall of Wards are also of similar design. The southern doors, however, are also locked and are notable for the three small recesses carved into the vertical area where they come together. Careful observation determines that the topmost incision is carved in the shape of a crescent moon, that the middle incision is carved in the shape of a cut gem, and that the bottom incision is carved in the shape of a miniature battle axe. Into these three recesses the Tripartite Key must be placed to gain access to area **9** and awaken the Sleeping Legion. (Without the Tripartite Key, access to area **9** is effectively impossible, as the double

doors are guarded by similar protections to those blocking access to the Sealed Vaults.)

Unique to this area is the presence of the foci of both the *earthward* and *Phezult's sleep of ages* spells. Twin circles of gems are hidden in a tiny secret cavity beneath the floor at the northern end of this hall (at the location marked "**F**"). Even the most careful examination of the floor at this point does not reveal the presence of this coffer-sized niche. Only the extremely fortuitous employment of a magical effect capable of detecting gems might reveal the location of the secret cavity. No means of reaching the niche was constructed by its dwarven builders short of physically ripping up the floor of the hall. Since its construction, only Bleucorundum has reached the cavity—by means of his psionics from area **26**—and he has done so only to replenish the gems contained, thus extending the duration of the twin spells.

9. Crypt of Honor. This vast chamber serves as both a tomb for the order's greatest heroes and as a place of rest for the Knights of the Crescent Moon who remain here in recumbent stasis. The vault stretches one hundred twenty feet in length and fifty feet in width, and its arched ceiling runs along the east-west axis of the room.

Forty-four biers line the walls of this room. Atop each bier rests a dwarven warrior-priest or human crusader in stasis.

Three massive sarcophagi, each twelve feet long, eight feet high, and six feet wide, dominate the center of the chamber. A carved depiction of the occupant in peaceful repose adorns each coffin's lid. From west to east, the occupants of each sarcophagus and the accompanying inscription are as follows:

❖ A half-dwarven warrior-priest of both Clangeddin and Selûne: *Lord Knight Commander Bryth Moonaxe, "May his blade be ever sharp and his time wax true anew."*

❖ A human priestess of Selûne: *Lady of the Seven Silver Stars Elhanna Moonhawk, "May the bride of Therlarn ever shine in the heavens."*

❖ A dwarven warrior-priest of Clangeddin Silverbeard: *First Axe Therlarn Axesong, "May he ever drink the mead of victory and be kissed by the crescent moon."*

Appearances not withstanding, Lord Moonaxe is not actually dead. In truth, he lies in stasis within his sarcophagi. If and when the doors leading into this chamber from the Hall of Wards (area **8**) are sundered, the order's commander is instantly released from his stasis by an ancient *spelltrigger* and imbued with *clairvoyance* by which he can spy on intruders. If any of the of the stone biers, sarcophagi, or occupants of the room are disturbed in any fashion or if he so wishes, Bryth is teleported to the doorway of the chamber where he appears standing, facing south into the crypt.

After Bryth's appearance, the main goal of the adventure is effectively concluded. The Lord Knight Commander attempts to ascertain the situation, awaken a few of his long-sleeping comrades, and begin preparations for the order's refounding. The exact sequence of events depends on the current status of the Sapphire Sentinel, Artides the Finder, the Doom Brigade, and the PCs. Careful diplomacy on the part of the PCs is crucial if they wish to recruit the Knights of the Crescent Moon in the coming war with forces of Mintar. If the DM wishes and the PCs are effective in the ensuing discussions, this adventure can serve as a springboard for a series of adventures set against the backdrop of the rising tide of war. See the discussion below entitled "Further Adventures" for ideas on what such a campaign might entail.

10–11. Upper Wyrmtunnels. The Upper Wyrmtunnels were excavated by Bleucorundum when he first took up residence in these catacombs, and they are connected via the Lower Wyrmtunnel (area **26**) to each other and to the dragon's lair (areas **27–28**). From these 20–40' diameter tunnels, Bleucorundum can spy on and quickly emerge into most of the first level of the Halls of the Sleeping Legion.

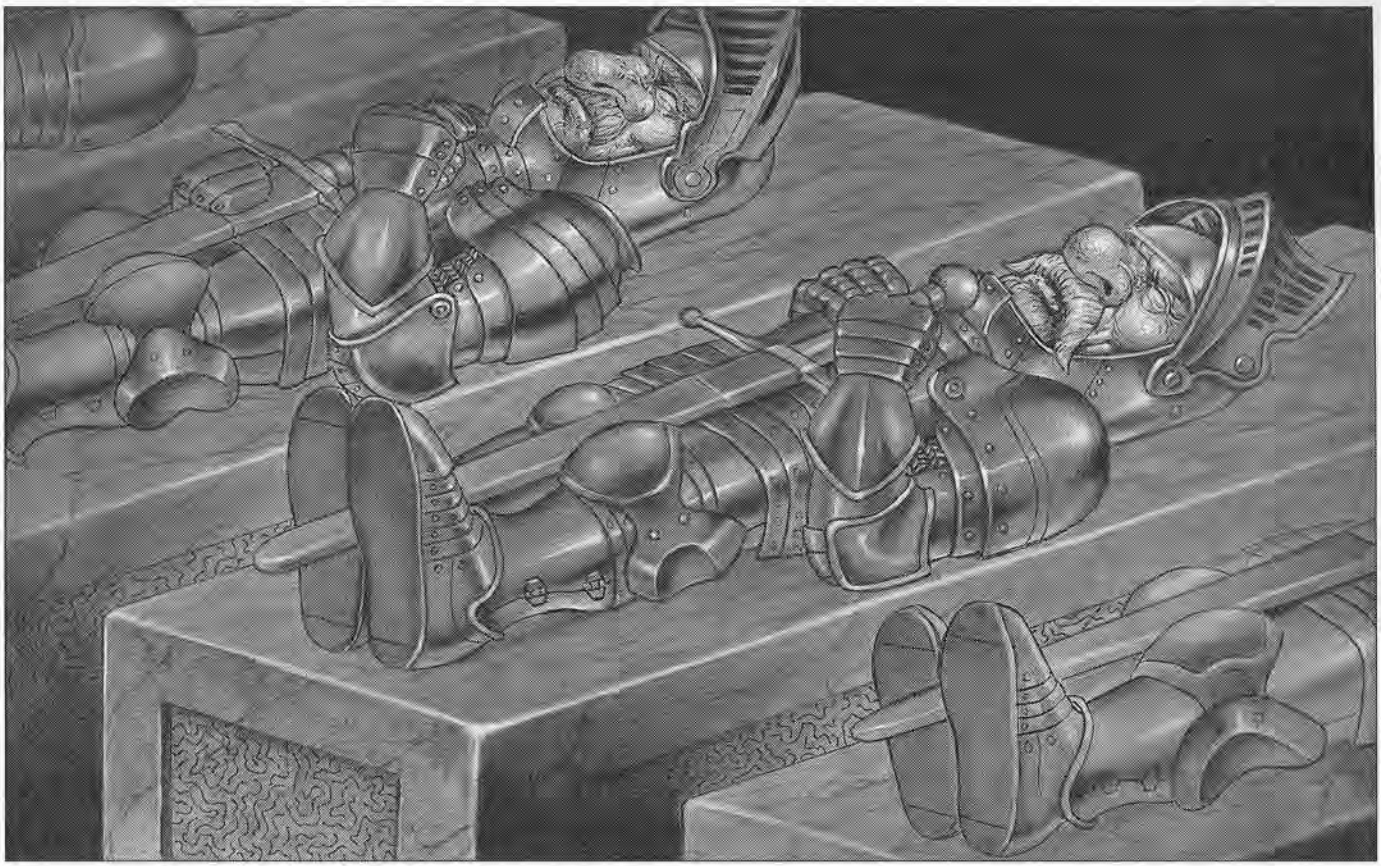
With the arrival of the Doom Brigade, the Western Wyrmtunnel has been heavily damaged and segmented into disjoint sections by the disintegrated tunnel (area **1**). Now nearly twenty feet of unstable rubble separates the bisected Western Wyrmtunnel from the steeply sloping shaft leading down from the surface.

12. Hall of Golems. This octagonal chamber stands at the heart of the first level of the underground complex. Opposing double doors face off on the north-south and east-west axes. The sloped ceiling rises from each wall to a height of twenty feet before leveling off to form a flat square with twenty-foot long sides.

A dwarf who can detect stonework traps, pits, and deadfalls or any PC with the spellcraft or stonemasonry proficiency has a normal chance of recognizing that the flat region in the center of the ceiling is not natural stone. In fact, the center section of the ceiling is a magical effect crafted by the repeated casting of *wall of stone* spells (each cast at 18th level of magic use). The barrier prevents the tons of boulders that fill an ancient shaft leading from this room up to the surface from inundating this chamber with rubble. If anyone is so foolish as to *dispel* or *disintegrate* all of the magical barriers, stones large and small will rain down until this room is buried in rock.

In each corner of the room stands (or stood) a powerful dwarven construct known as a hammer golem. Resembling gigantic stone dwarves with weapons in lieu of forearms, each hammer golem stands nine feet tall and weighs over a ton. The left and right forearms of each statue are replaced by a pickaxe and hammer, respectively. Each construct is clad in adamantine plate mail and does not communicate except to give out a hollow roar in the presence of orcs and their kin. Each golem has been instructed to guard the doors to its immediate left and right against all who attempt to pass. Thus, anyone attempting to pass through any of the four doors must face two of the silent, stone sentinels unless one or both has been previously destroyed.

Fortunately for the PCs, the Doom Brigade has already dispatched two of the hammer golems. If the Doom Brigade ventures through this chamber on a second pass, they are careful to engage only a single golem at a time (through careful choice of portals) and, thanks to their previous experience, suffer fewer casualties.



Beneath the Omlarandin Mountains, a dwarf and his bier are seldom parted.

Hammer golems (2 remaining): INT non (0); AL N; AC 0; MV 6, Br 6; HD 14, hp 60 each; THAC0 7; #AT 2; Dmg: 2d10 (hammer) and 2d12 (pick-axe); SA pounding force; SD +1 or better weapon to hit; MR spell immunities; SZ L (9' tall); ML 20; XP 13,000; *MC Annual, Volume I.*

Hammer golems can employ a special pounding force attack 1/turn. In addition to engendering the effects of a *repulsion* spell, it inflicts 4d6 hp damage (save vs. spell for half damage). Hammer golems are virtually immune to all spells except for *wish,* which affects the construct normally, and *stone to flesh,* which acts as a *heal* spell on the golem.

13. Antechamber. This hallway leads to the chapel (area **14**). The floor is fashioned from 2' square red and white marble tiles laid out in a chessboard pattern that slopes upward at a very gentle grade. The semicylindrical ceiling rises to a height of eighteen feet at its highest point.

The walls are adorned with frescoes. In every image, grim-faced dwarves and human crusaders mad with battle-lust are shown battling hopeless odds yet acquitting themselves admirably. Many of the battles are waged against malevolent eye tyrants and their minions, but others depict battles with genies, dark elves, and other magical beasts.

A careful examination of the frescoes suggests one overriding image: The order's fearless veterans always wield blood red battle axes that shimmer under the light of the full moon that is always overhead. A close study of the floor might reveal (if a successful Intelligence check is made by the examiner with a –5 penalty) a series of stress cracks in the marble, suggesting a creature of great bulk had sat here unmoving for hours on end, studying the frescoes for the hidden clues to the order's history contained within.

The eastern end of the hall bends northward for a short distance before ending in a pair of massive stone doors. A massive bas-relief of a pair of crossed battle axes adorns each door, but no hinges or means of opening the doors is readily apparent. A successful religion (dwarven) proficiency check reveals that the stone carvings depict the holy symbol of the dwarven god of battle, Clangeddin Silverbeard.

Each door weighs several tons, and any attempt to push, pull, or otherwise force the doors always fails, regardless of the strength applied to the task. Likewise, a *knock* spell or *chime of opening* is unlikely to succeed, since the dwarven craftsmen who constructed this engineering marvel embedded over two hundred individual locking mechanisms into the door.

At the eastern end of the chamber, on the wall opposite the grand doors leading into the Hall of Battle, one subtle anomaly has been worked into the frescoes that indicates the location of trigger for opening the doors

into the Hall of Battle. Only someone with spellcraft proficiency and knowledge of magical items known as *chimes of opening* has a chance of spotting the discrepancy, and then only if they are actively searching for an anomaly and if they make a successful proficiency check. In the middle of a battle scene pitting three dwarves and two humans against a beholder, the dwarven priest character, who faces directly toward the viewer of the montage, is in the process of ringing the chime instead of participating in the ambient carnage. If a viewer spots the anomaly and presses or strikes the image of the chime in any fashion, the section of the fresco depicting the chime will recede slightly, and the massive double doors to the north silently and smoothly swing open into the adjoining Hall of Battle (area **14**).

14. Hall of Battle. This grand cathedral of Clangeddin Silverbeard soars to a height of 48 feet at its apex in the center of the chamber. Six great pillars support the peaked roof, each one carved to resemble a trio of dwarven titans straining to support the mountainous terrain above. A shining steel altar, resembling a dwarven great helm with a flattened top, rests atop an oblong hexagonal dais at the northern end of the temple. Behind the altar hangs a large, 20' × 20' bright silver tapestry from a pair of stone knobs approximately thirty feet above the floor. The tapestry is embroidered with a pair of blood red crossed battle-axes. As discussed above, a successful religion (dwarven) proficiency check (if one has not already been made) reveals that the image on the tapestry depicts the holy symbol of the dwarven god of battle, Clangeddin Silverbeard.

Two rounds after the grand entrance doors (see area **13**) swing open, they swing shut and do not open again until exactly one hour has expired. (Treat the effect as that of a *wizard lock* spell cast at the 18th level of magic use.) Two rounds after the doors shut, the stone knobs from which the tapestry is hung retract into the wall, allowing the wall hanging to fall to the dais below. Behind the tapestry is a great, circular mirror nearly twelve feet in diameter set in an ironwood frame. The mirror is actually a *mirror of opposition*, affixed to the cathedral wall with *sovereign glue*. Anyone caught in its reflection (i.e. anyone between the mirror and the entrance portal, within the central space demarcated by the grand columns, and lower than twenty-five feet in altitude), has an exact duplicate emerge to do battle against him, as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

If and when the duplicates are defeated, if the participants in the battle have acquitted themselves well, a strong earthquake rocks the Hall of Battle. Bits and pieces of masonry rain down briefly, but the only significant damage—aside from the shattering of the *mirror of opposition*—is caused when part of the northwestern pillar breaks off and tumbles to the floor pointing eastward. (Anyone unfortunate enough to be in the path of the shattered pillar must make a successful Dexterity check to avoid being hit by the falling stone. Failure indicates 4d12 hp crushing damage.)

When the piece of the northwestern pillar smashes to the ground, it opens a small crack that travels across the floor to the western side of the base of the northeastern pillar and then thirty feet up the side of that pillar, ending at the symbol of Clangeddin depicted on a stone amulet carved to hang from the neck of one of the dwarven titans.

If the crack is widened through use of a *stone shape* spell, physical labor, or by some other means, the Father of Battle's component of the Tripartite Key—a miniature darksteel battle axe—will be discovered. When the miniature axe is first grasped, the deep booming voice of an ancient, powerful dwarf emanates from the walls and echoes throughout the temple saying, *"Axes clash as ancient armies assemble; herald the reawakened vision."*

15. Halls of Silent Thoughts. These long, unmarked passages are lined with small granite tiles along the walls, floor, and ceiling.

A permanent *silence 15' radius* spell has been repeatedly cast along the length of each hall (at the 18th level of magic use), cloaking the entire extent in perpetual soundlessness. A *spell trigger* ensures that the magical silence is never broken by immediately renewing any spell which is dispelled.

16. Tears of Selûne. This area is magically illuminated with a silvery light that does not radiate from any apparent source.

The walls, ceilings, and floor of the chamber are tiled with 2' square slabs of white marble. Each tile is effectively an ornate dwarven runestone. Inscribed in each runestone is a spiral of Dethek runes etched into the marble and inlaid with silver filigree. At the center of each spiral is either the symbol of Selûne or the symbol of Clangeddin. (The symbols of the two deities alternate from runestone to runestone in both horizontal and vertical directions.)

Collectively, the runes inscribed on the runestones compose the library of the Order of the Crescent Moon. Unfortunately for the casual scholar, these writings are encrypted by the alphabet in which they are written—Dethek runes—compounded with the use of an arcane dialect of Dwarvish derived from the long-forgotten religious tongues of early churches of Selûne and Clangeddin.

Bleucorundum has spent many decades unlocking the secrets held within these cryptic writings and, from them, the Sapphire Sentinel has deduced much of the order's history. If given the opportunity, Artides immediately begins his own course of study to unlock the secrets of these runestones, but even such a learned historian as he has difficulty making headway.

The secrets concealed within the order's library are left to the DM to devise, but they most assuredly reveal much of the ancient history of the *Lands of Intrigue* including the history of the Order of the Crescent Moon and the military, political, and religious battles it fought. Tantalizing fragments deciphered by the PCs, Bleucorundum, or Artides might hint at the location of treasures long lost and other secrets long forgotten.

Two secret doors lead into the Chapel of the Crescent Moon (area **17**). Each door is accessed by pressing the appropriate symbol of Selûne at the center of one of the runestones. Doing so causes a section of wall

(exactly three marble tiles high and three marble tiles wide) to swing inward. Both doors can be easily opened from their opposite sides.

17. Chapel of the Crescent Moon. Hidden behind twin secret portals, this chamber is consecrated to Selûne, goddess of the moon and one of the order's two divine patrons. If not for the cloaking magic of a unique variant of a *permanent illusion* spell (cast at the 18th-level of magic use), this room would resemble a single slice of a quartered sphere.

The north wall and the floor are perfectly flat, created from one-foot square, white marble tiles. Each marble tile is sculpted with a bas-relief of the Moonmaiden's symbol: a pair of darkly beautiful human female eyes surrounded by a circle of seven stars.

The half-dome that makes up the rest of the walls and ceiling depicts the sky as can be seen at that moment from the highest peak of Omlarandin range while facing east. Depending upon the ambient light conditions on the surface, this room may be lit with bright sunlight or softly illuminated by the moon and stars. Regardless of the outside temperature and weather conditions, this room is always as warm as a cool summer evening, and the wind is never stronger than a light zephyr from the east.

Any non-evil being of Low intelligence or better who utters a prayer to the Moonmaiden while within this chamber receives the effects of a *bless* spell for the next twenty-four hours. Any creature so foolish as to attempt to desecrate this shrine is teleported to area **12** and attacked by any remaining golems. As well, *moonwebs* (as the fifth-level priest spell detailed in *Faiths & Avatars*, cast at the 14th level of ability) block entrance into the Chapel of the Crescent Moon for the next 24 hours or until destroyed.

Selûne's component of the Tripartite Key—a miniature silver crescent moon—is concealed in an extra-dimensional space, similar in construction if not size to that of a *rope trick* spell. The space is accessible only from this room and only when the moon is visible in the illusory sky. If a being reaches out to touch the illusory moon (some form of ladder, step, or flight is typically necessary if the moon is high up on the half-dome), its hand (or whatever form of appendage is doing the reaching) passes through the lunar image as well as the chamber's wall into the space that holds the component of the Tripartite Key, enabling its recovery.

Lower Level

18. Hall of History. Wide stone stairs lead down from the Hall of Silent Thoughts (area **15**) into the southern end of the Hall of History, which then widens to a width of forty feet. The northern end of the hall is capped by a half-dome. Along the eastern and western walls, small alcoves lead to stout ironwood doors, reinforced with bands of steel.

The walls of the chamber are adorned with eighteen frescoes, each approximately ten feet square. Each painting depicts a specific event in the history of the order, from the group's founding, to a battle with a green wyrm of tremendous size, to conflicts with dark elves in the Forest of Mir, to raging firestorms unleashed by long-imprisoned efreet, to the Battle of Eyesvale with the beholders of the Alimir Hive and their armies, to the order's apparent disbanding and the destruction of the chapter-house, and, finally, to the remaining members' secret internment in the ancient catacombs of which this hall is a part. The last fresco depicts the order's reawakening and includes three incongruous scenes: a dog howling beneath a crescent moon, a deep fissure opening in the floor of a subterranean temple, and a band of adventurers, whose identity is obscured by dark shadows, battling a horde of beholders. Above these three scenes is the image of a door into which have been carved three small shapes: a crescent moon, a battle axe, and a cut gem.

At the north end of the room, a thick, gray tome rests atop a natural outcropping of stone whose top has been sheered off and polished. The book's silver cover has been hammered so as to depict countless eyes in bas-relief. The book is a *bestiary of beholders* (see "New Magical Items" sidebar) that radiates a strong dweomer as well as a small amount of heat. If the bestiary is touched, a 2' tall humanoid being composed of elemental fire appears and attacks. The book's warden is an enspelled tome guardian. (The tome guardian is always visible with infravision, even before the warded object is disturbed.)

Tome guardian: INT average (10); AL N; AC 2; MV 12; HD 4+4, hp 34; THAC0 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; SA fireburst (see below); SD spell immunities (see below); healed by fire and electricity; SZ T (2' tall); ML 14; XP 3,000; *Pages from the Mages*.

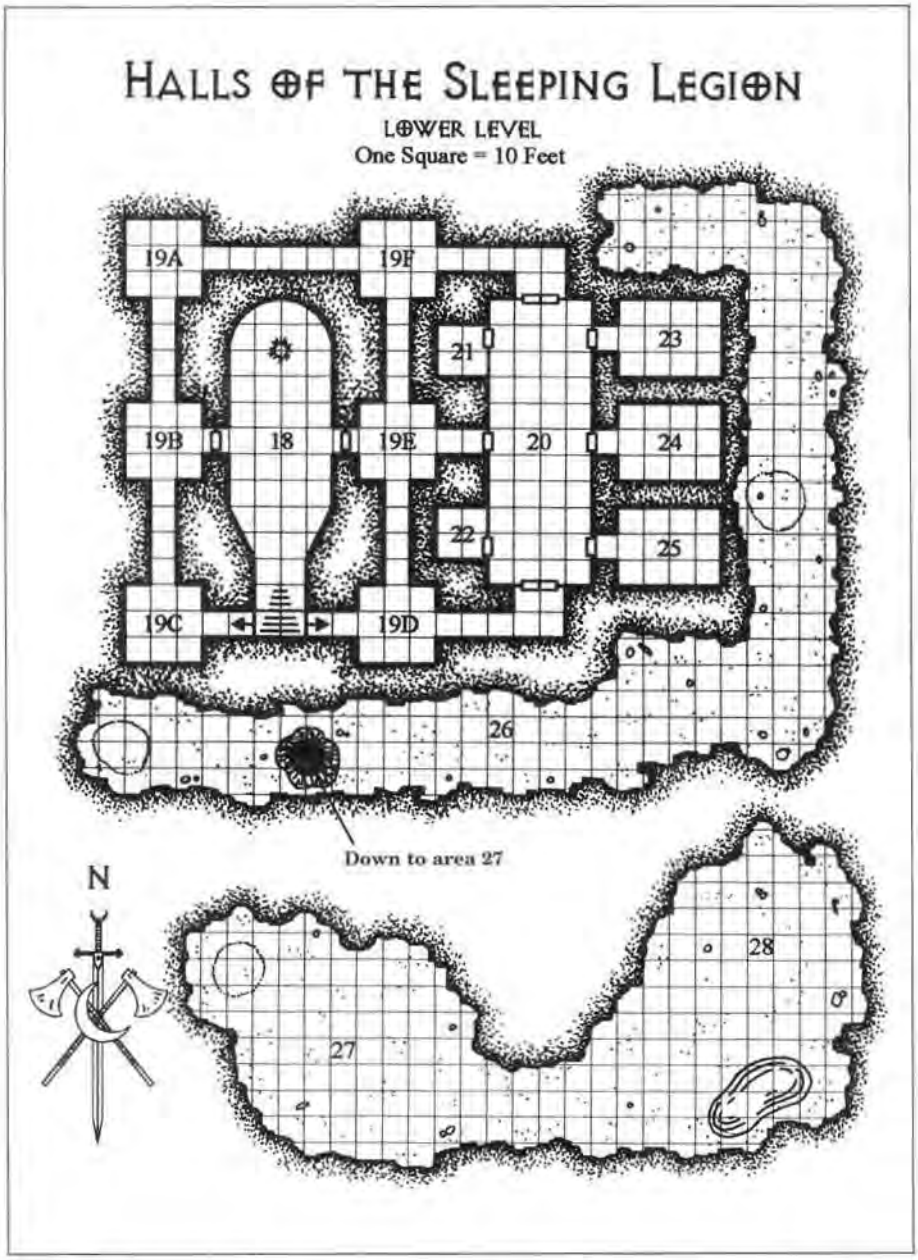
A tome guardian can be "driven out" of the guarded object by the casting of a *dispel magic* if the guardian fails its saving throw vs. spell.

Tome guardians can, thrice per day (at most once per round) unleash a *fireburst*—a pencil-thin, white-hot flame. Only one target is affected, and a *fireburst* can operate through clothing, armor, or weapons or be passed through a mental attack or attempt at mental communication, whether from spell item, or natural ability, to the individual who launched the mental attack or communication. A *fireburst* deals 6d4 hp internal damage (no saving throw) to any creature not immune to the effects of heat or fire. Human, demi-human, or humanoid creatures who survive a *fireburst* are rendered unconscious for 1d4+1 turns unless they make a saving throw vs. poison with a –3 penalty.

Tomb guardians can absorb fiery or electrical energy impinging on it or the enveloped book, with a corresponding increase in hit points for the next 24 hours. Absorbed hit points of energy can be added directly to the damage caused by a *fireburst* attack, if desired.

Tomb guardians can absorb heat energy without effect. They suffer double damage from cold, but not from water attacks. Physical attacks on the enveloped book do not inflict damage until the guardian is destroyed. However, such attacks always inflict maximum damage on a tome guardian because it must form a rigid shell to ward off blows. Tome guardians are unaffected by most Enchantment/Charm magic and cannot be psionically dominated.

19. Vaults of the Fallen. These thirty foot square cubiculums house the remains of the order's fallen members. Each chamber has two,



three, or four exits which are either doorways set in recessed alcoves or eastward leading passageways.

Each 10' × 10' section of wall (but not in the alcoves or interconnecting passageways) is pierced by six horizontal niches capped with white marble headstones 2' square and 4" thick. Many of these burial recesses contain bones and dust, and their headstones are engraved with brief memorials. The remainder of the burial niches are unoccupied, their headstones unadorned. Each headstone is tightly fitted into an aperture in the wall, and next to impossible to remove without first shattering the stone. Each headstone is warded by *glyph of warding* of the DM's devising.

20. Martial Hall. This hall served as a weapons drilling area and as an assembly hall for expeditions into Deep Shanatar (before the passage to the ancient dwarven kingdom was forever sealed). As a result, the heavy tread of countless boots has carved deep furrows into the floor over time. Grand stone double doors bar passage to the north and south, and a trio of smaller doors, of similar construction to those found elsewhere in the complex, adorn both the east and west walls.

In the exact center of the chamber floats a death kiss in *temporal stasis*. The monstrous beholder-kin has a spherical body resembling that of an eye tyrant, but the "eyestalks" are bloodsucking tentacles, extendible up to 20 feet, and the "eyes" are hook-toothed orifices. (A death kiss is 90% likely to be mistaken for a beholder when sighted.) Imprisoned here in the days before the order entered its long sleep, this eye of terror (as death kisses or bleeders were originally known) serves as both a deadly trap and guardian for the third component of the Tripartite Key. A *spelltrigger* has been set so as to cast *temporal reinstatement* on the death kiss one round after a living human or demi-human enters this hall. The bleeder immediately moves to attack any warm-blooded creature it encounters.

Sometimes two death kisses meet and mate without battling to the death. If such a "love match" occurs (one time in six), the two death kisses involved soon part to hunt again in solitary fashion. Inside their bodies, however, 5d10 buds develop, feeding on the bodies and blood of the parents—and driving the pregnant death kisses into a reckless feeding frenzy. A month after mating, each parent becomes a manic husk, hollowed out from within by its offspring. It continues feeding and fighting until it becomes so fragile that a single blow causes it to burst open.

Through the strange workings of fate, this particular death kiss was trapped in *temporal stasis* in the final stages of its life cycle before giving birth to a new generation. As a result, the first blow to inflict damage on the bleeder's hollowed-out body causes the monster to burst apart and release 40 death kiss spawn. The spawn, starved for blood, immediately form a voracious swarm. Given a spherical area of open air at least 10 feet in diameter around the target, up to 14 spawn can attack a single human-sized target in a round.

After spawning, the parent's body quickly disintegrates into small, desiccated bits, making it obvious that

little remained save the husk. One organ has survived the death of the eye of terror: A brain or nerve node deep inside the body has hardened into a soft-sided but faceted red gem. "Bloodeyes," as such emerald-cut gems are known, typically fetch a market price of 70 gp each. This particular bloodeye is engraved with the symbols of Selûne and Clangeddin and serves as the third component of the Tripartite Key.

When the bloodeye is first touched, a *magic mouth* cast on the ceiling long ago intones—*"Terrors fade and portals part; assemble the Tripartite Key"*—in first archaic Common and then in Dwarvish:

Death kiss: INT high (13); AL NE; AC 4/6/8; MV Fl 9 (C); HD 10; hp 1 (see above); THAC0 11; #AT 10; Dmg 1d8 (×10); SA blood drain, ram (1d8 hp damage); SD regeneration, 120' infravision; SZ H (12' diameter, tentacles to 20' long); ML 17; XP 420 (reduced from 8,000 to account for its imminent demise); *MM*/21.

The central body is AC 4, the central eye is AC 8, the tentacles are AC 6, and the mouths on their ends are AC 4. A hit on a tentacle-mouth will stun the tentacle, causing it to writhe helplessly for 1d4 rounds. Tentacles can withstand 6 hp damage from edged weapons before severing. They are torn free from a victim by applying a total of 22 Strength points, but tearing them loose inflicts 1d6 hp damage per tentacle.

After its initial strike, each tentacle drains 2 hp of blood per round. Damaged, but not destroyed, tentacles withdraw up to 6 hp of blood to immediately restore themselves to full health. Tentacles can draw blood even after the central body is destroyed, if they are already so engaged.

At the cost of one charge (equal to 1 hp of drained blood), a bleeder can heal one point of damage to each of its ten tentacles, its central body, and its eye (12 hp in all). The death kiss can do so every other round, in addition to its normal attacks and activity. Each tentacle can store up to 24 charges of drained energy, and the body is capable of storing 50 charges of drained energy. A severed tentacle is 70% likely to transmit its cumulative charge to anything touching it when severed, each charge dealing 1 hp of electrical damage.

Death kiss spawn (40): INT average (8); AL NE; AC 8; MV Fl 9 (C); HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 10; Dmg 1 (×10); SA blood drain (1d4 hp/round beginning on the round after attachment); SD 120' infravision; SZ T (8" diameter, tentacles to 2' long); ML 19; XP 120; *MM*/21 and *DRAGON® Magazine* #188.

21. Castings Storehouse. Entrance to this small chamber, as with all the chambers accessible only from area **20,** is blocked by a stout ironwood door reinforced with bands of steel and warded by a *symbol of fear* (cast at 18th level of magic use).

The Castings Storehouse is partially filled with 100 wooden crates reinforced with metal bands. Visible through the cracks between the slats are large pieces of limestone tightly packed together. If one or more crates are opened and the limestone pieces then examined, it becomes readily apparent that these are molds for crafting weapons and pieces of armor.

Dwarves, armorers, and weaponsmiths may recall (25% chance per person) that the dwarves of the South were said to employ some sort of transformation magic capable of briefly transforming malleable limestone into a substance harder than granite and impervious to even the incredibly hot temperatures needed to forge steel and other rarer metals.

22. Ingot Storehouse. Entrance to this small chamber, as with all the chambers accessible only from area **20**, is blocked by a stout ironwood door, reinforced with bands of steel and warded by a *symbol of fear* (cast at 18th level of magic use).

This Ingot Storehouse is nearly filled with 240 wooden crates reinforced with metal bands. Visible through the cracks between the slats are brick-shaped iron ingots. Each ingot is 4" × 4" × 12" and 108 such ingots fit in each 2' × 2' × 3' crate.

At the DM's option, one in ten of the crates (mostly those in the rear) are filled with ingots of silver, gold, or even rarer metals magically plated with a thin layer of steel.

23–25. Armories. Entrance to each of these large chambers is blocked by a stout ironwood door, reinforced with bands of steel and warded by a *symbol of fear* (cast at 18th level of ability).

Each Armory is filled with several hundred wooden crates of varying sizes reinforced with metal bands. Unlike the crates found in the storehouses (areas **21** and **22**), the crates in these three chambers are carefully fitted so that the contents within are fully enclosed and no cracks exist between the slats.

A wide variety of offensive and defensive implements are contained within each crate, each carefully wrapped in a bed of brittle brush stalks. While most of the crates contain conventional non-magical weapons of war, including suits of armor (human and dwarf-sized), shields, swords, maces, axes, crossbows, and crossbow bolts, a few crates contain precious examples of weapons developed during the Eye Tyrant wars and long-since forgotten. In hands of the war wizards of Tethyr and/or Erlkazar, many copies of these originals could be generated for use in the coming war with the Vaxall and its hive, as most of the unique weapons are specifically designed to enable a company of warriors to battle an eye tyrant with a modest chance of victory.

The DM should determine which crates contain such magical treasures, but it is suggested that they be scattered among the three armories and impossible to reach without removing the majority of each room's contents. In addition to magical or nonmagical items designed by the DM, suggested treasures include the following:

- three brittle vellum scrolls, each inscribed with a *ray refraction* spell;
- three *amulets of petrification reversal*;
- two *shields of refraction*;
- six carefully wrapped packets of *dust of dispersion*;
- five *tyrantblades*, each keyed to a unique beholder eye power selected by the DM.

These items are detailed fully in the "New Magical Items" sidebar.

26. Lower Wyrmtunnel. Similar to the Upper Wyrmtunnels (areas **10–11**), the Lower Wyrmtunnel was dug by Bleucorundum when he first took up residence in these catacombs. From this 30' diameter tunnel, the

Sapphire Sentinel can spy on and quickly emerge into most of the second level of the Halls of the Sleeping Legion.

Two 20' diameter shafts lead up to areas **10** and **11** respectively. Deep claw marks along the shafts indicate that the sapphire dragon frequently climbs up these tubes to reach the level above.

A twenty-foot diameter shaft descends at roughly a 45° angle (with half a dozen strictly vertical or horizontal sections interspersed along the way) for nearly a thousand feet to the Wyrm's Parlor (area **27**). Almost at the end of the shaft, in a region that descends vertically for nearly 100 feet, is a small ellipsoid dead magic zone (fifty feet from the bottom of the shaft). Of particular note is the region's effect on spells such as *spider climb* or *fly* which are immediately terminated. Unwary adventurers plummet into the chamber below if they are not protected by nonmagical means. (It seems unlikely that this dead magic zone appeared in this shaft by chance, yet it is unknown how Bleucorundum might have engineered its appearance in this exact spot.) The exact damage incurred by such unfortunates varies depending on the circumstances of the descent, but it might be as much as 5d6 hp (1d6 hp damage/10 feet fallen).

The foci of the *Phezult's sleep of ages* and *earthward* spells embedded in the floor of the Hall of Wards (area **8**), directly above this location. By means of his psionics, Bleucorundum has reached the circles of gems which serve as the foci of their respective incantations and replenished the supply of gems that serve to fuel the twin wards.

27. Wyrm's Parlor. A sharply sloped shaft connects the Lower Wyrmtunnel (area **26**) with this 50' high cavern to Bleucorundum's lair, and a 20' diameter horizontal tunnel leads south from this cave to the Lair of the Wyrm (area **28**). The sapphire dragon widened a natural fissure in the earth to construct this chamber, and he has adorned it with the relics of countless battles long since past. The floor of the southern half of the cavern is buried in several feet of spear heads, rusted blades, battered shields, fragments of armor, and other debris collected from long forgotten battlefields. Of little but historical value, the nonmagical arms and equipment of war that clutter this cavern impede rapid movement and inflict 1d6 hp damage per round upon anyone who attempts to traverse this rust monster's nirvana without sufficient foot and leg protection, a resilient armor class (AC 0 or better), or a successful Dexterity check every round. Bleucorundum, of course, simply flies over the detritus.

A potentially deadly trap lurks below the northern shaft of the cavern. The cave floor directly beneath the shaft is actually paper-thin layer of rock worked by repeated *stone shape* spells and concealed by a scattering of dirt and rusted weapons. It is designed so as to collapse if forced to support in excess of fifty pounds of weight. (Bleucorundum carefully avoids this trap when he traverses the shaft by carefully stepping outside of the trapped floor, a feat achievable only by a creature of his great size.) The pit beneath the gossamer stone floor descends fifty feet to a hard rock floor on which are scattered a dozen small puddles, each dimly illuminated by a *continual light* spell covered with a light sheen of dirt buried in the wall of the pit. Each puddle is enchanted with a *watery death* spell (see *ToM* for details) that will be released by the first creature to cast its reflection on the water. Although this trap has never been triggered, Bleucorundum fully expects that if a group of interlopers were to descend into his parlor, they would cause the floor to collapse, fall to the bottom of the shaft, and those who survived would be forced to immediately battle one or more liquid duplicates while the Sapphire Sentinel attacked from the top of the pit at his leisure with his breath weapon.

28. Lair of the Wyrm. This vast natural chamber was laboriously expanded by the Sapphire Sentinel centuries ago and is now over seventy feet in height, but the slow action of dripping rivulets of water has gradually worn smooth the roughest edges of his excavation. The chamber is dimly illuminated by *continual light* spells buried several inches beneath the cavern floor.

A tunnel, roughly 20 feet in diameter, extends northward roughly forty feet before opening into area **27**. Three nigh-invisible tripwires—each triggering a cacophony of bells hidden in the passage walls—cross the passage in various spots and at differing heights, so as to alert Bleucorundum of flying and walking intruders.

A crystalline pool of spring water in the southwestern corner of the cave serves as a reflective mirror to Bleucorundum's impressive hoard. The sapphire dragon has focused on the acquisition of gems (particularly sapphires), coins of widely varying mintages gathered from battlefields of yore, and military artifacts of historical import. Forming a clanking bed of metal are 5,782 cp, 26,923 sp, 7,920 ep, 4,300 gp, and 4,544 pp. The majority of the accumulated coins are of Calishite, Chondathan, and Shanataran origin from a wide range of eras, but a sizable percentage of the assembled monies are of Amnian, Cormyrean, Tethyrian, Iltkazarn, Waterdhavian, and even more obscure mintages. Displayed on small ledges in the cavern wall behind the pool are 19 sapphires, seven black sapphires, three star sapphires, as well as 13 other jewels of widely varying types. The combined value of these gems is 24,550 gp.

Bleucorundum's hoard includes many magical and nonmagical items of lore or historical import. Several of the magical treasures are discussed briefly below, and, if necessary, the DM is encouraged to expand on them, as well as to add several items of his or her own creation. (Note that the dragon also possesses numerous potions of *healing* and *extra-healing* and other elixirs of a curative nature. These are hidden in niches along the walls, 20–25 feet above the floor.)

❖ Blazing Banner of Ologh the Overking: The legendary battle standard of fallen Vastar, borne by the great orc-king ere his death at the claws of Iyrauroth the black wyrm, transforms into a tapestry of fire when raised aloft in battle and exhibits the powers of a *law's banner*, as described in the *ToM* and the *Encyclopedia Magica, Volume I*.

❖ Seven Scrolls of Syòrpiir: Penned by an elven priest-general in the decades leading up the Second Crown War, these scrolls detail seven

rare battle spells that were otherwise lost after the Ilythiiri destroyed the sylvan realm of Syòrpiir.

❖ Karlyn's Thunderaxe: This great, *two-handed axe +2, giant slayer* was wielded by the general who led the dwarven armies of Shanatar in the slaughter of the last major giant tribe of the South. The weapon was said to be capable of calling bolts of lightning down on the bearer's foes.

❖ Firefan of Teshyllal Fields: This great folding fan, nearly five feet across at its widest point, is forged of tempered mithril and painted so as to depict the fabled City of Brass of the efreet. Employed by the armies of the Great Pasha Memnon in their battles with the djinn of the Calim Caliphate, the *firefan* is said to have fanned the great conflagrations that raged across ancient Calimshan in the Era of Skyfire until its loss in the Battle of Teshyllal Fields.

❖ Eyestalker: This *short sword +1, +3 vs. beholders* was crafted for a halfling lord of Meiritin and used by a series of champions of Arvoreen against the beholders that threatened that land for several centuries before it disappeared.

Further Adventures

This adventure can serve as a springboard for an epic campaign in the southeastern quarter of Tethyr. Depending upon how events unfold during the playing of this adventure, the PCs may have discovered some or all of the following facts: the conquest of Kzelter by the Knights of the Black Gauntlet is but the first step in their drive to extend the borders of the city-state of Mintar; beholders are once again rising in influence in the western reaches of the Lake of Steam and are the driving force behind the armies of Mintar; and the armies of Mintar are composed of inhuman warriors created by sorcery. Any or all of this information would be of great use to Tethyr's rulers, and delivering such valuable intelligence would be sure to win their appreciation and future commissions in Tethyr's service. The discovery, reawakening, and recruitment in the defense of Tethyr of the Sleeping Legion, coupled with their armory of magical items designed for battling beholders, would be of invaluable service to the kingdom.

Possible future adventures on behalf of the monarchs of Tethyr include alerting the newly independent nation of Erlkazar about the growing threat on its southern border, tracking Vaxall to its lair in the Thornwood, investigating rumors of a growing beholder beast cult in southeastern Amn, or infiltrating Mintar and spying on the military preparations of the Order of the Black Gauntlet.

Possible adventures on behalf of Bleucorundum might include exploring the tunnels of Deep Shanatar, exploring a series of tombs in the Alimir mountains in which some of Calimshan's greatest generals were buried, or tracking down the Sword of Starlight—part of Tethyr's royal regalia that was lost in the Year of the Blazing Brand (1334 DR) when Prince Rythan was slain in the Battle of Nightflames with the mages of Mulsparkh.

Over the next few years, Tethyr may be drawn into a second series of Eye Tyrant Wars with the PCs square in the middle of the conflict. The PCs might rise to command some of Tethyr's armies or serve as an elite strike force against Knights of the Black Gauntlet. Eventually they might discover the role of the Twisted Rune behind all of these events and be drawn into conflict with the Rune's most powerful minions.

Important NPCs

The following monsters and NPCs figure prominently in this scenario. The DM should review this section before running the adventure.

The Gnome Scholar

Artides the Finder (male rock gnome historian—Collector): INT exceptional (16); AL NG; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 6; His5; hp 20; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type, typically short sword (1d6); SD saves as T5; +3 bonus to saving throws vs. magic; S 10, D 9, C 12, I 16, W 11, Ch 10; SZ S; ML 12; XP 420; *MM*/159 and *Sages & Specialists*.

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
WHEN I WAS TRAINING IN THE TEMPLE, THEY USED COLD MARBLES.
MY TEACHER PUT RANCID SOCKS OR UNDERWEAR BENEATH MY NOSE. THAT WORKED!
WELL, I STILL FAVOR THE "HAND IN WARM WATER" METHOD; IT'S ENTERTAINING AS WELL AS EFFECTIVE!
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'VE CONSIDERED CONSULTING THE PROPHECIES ON HOW TO WAKE THESE GUYS...
NO PROPHECY COULD BE THIS MUCH FUN!

Notes: Artides speaks Gnomish as well as Alzhedo, Beholder, Common, Dwarvish, and Giant. His only weapon proficiency is in the use of the short sword. His nonweapon proficiencies include ancient history (Tethyr), appraising, heraldry, local history (Tethyr), reading/writing (Common), reading/writing (Dethek Runes), and reading/writing (Thorass). Artides venerates both Nebelun the Meddler and Oghma the Binder. He has 60' infravision, and he can detect sloping passages (1–5/d6), unsafe stonework (1–7/d10), approximate depth (1–4/d6) and direction (1–3/d6) when underground.

Artides suffers a –3 penalty to hit with weapons in which he is not proficient. There is a 20% chance that any magical item he attempts to use malfunctions (armor, weapons, and illusory items excepted).

Appearance: Artides resembles a small, thin, nimble dwarf. He has sapphire blue eyes, thinning gray hair pulled back in a tangled pony-tail, and a neatly trimmed goatee. The gnome's prominent proboscis is sunburnt red, but the rest of his skin is a woody brown with a hint of gray. The scholar favors leather tunics and breeches into which are sewn voluminous pockets.

Personality: Artides is exuberant and outgoing with exaggerated gestures and theatrical flourishes. The gnome is a true master in his chosen field of study—early military history of southwestern Faerûn—and he has a bard's gift for communicating his vocation to those who find history boring. Artides has a fantastic memory and is well-read, allowing him to interject tangential remarks into nearly any conversation, whether or not such interruptions are welcome.

History: Artides the Finder acquired his nickname as a young child as a result of his insatiable need to root about in every field, stream, and ruin within walking distance of the village in which he was born in search of artifacts from ancient battles conjured by his imagination. As a young adult, the inquisitive young gnome was apprenticed to Delitar the Slow of Westgate for several years, during which time he became fascinated with military history, particularly that of the lands of Shanatar and the human kingdoms which succeeded it. Upon reaching his maturity, the Finder headed north and west to the City of Splendors, where he spent many years among the followers of Oghma and Deneir and built up a strong friendship with several noble patrons with a fondness for military history.

While living in Waterdeep, Artides uncovered hints of an ancient order of religious knights dedicated to Selûne and Clangeddin that fought with honor before the erection of the Standing Stone during the long-forgotten Eye Tyrant Wars. Several months of research enabled him to conclude that the Order of the Crescent Moon had withdrawn to its chapter-house and disbanded within a few years of the war's end. He could find no record of the where the order's redoubt had been located nor what had become of it. Artides eventually concluded that several tomes found only in the libraries of Candlekeep might hold the key to unlocking the puzzle. With a small amount of funding from his noble patrons, the Finder set out for Candlekeep and then Saradush in search of a discovery of great historical import.

The Sapphire Sentinel

Bleucorundum (very old male sapphire dragon): INT genius (18); AL LN; AC –8; MV 9, Fl 30 (C), Br 6; HD 18; hp 121; THAC0 3; #AT 3 + special; Dmg 1d8+9/1d8+9/3d6+11; SA breath weapon; dragon fear; magical items; spell use; SD spell immunities (see below); magical items; MR 40%; SZ G (87' body, 44' tail); ML 18; XP 15,000; *MM*/73 (dragon, gem).

Notes: Bleucorundum is experienced in the use of all the standard draconic attack forms, including claws, bite, breath weapon, snatch, plummet, kick, wing buffet, tail slap, stall, and spells. He is cautious in battle and takes his time to evaluate an opponent before fully committing himself to combat. The Sapphire Sentinel's normal strategy is to cast *bless* once per day and *mirror image* before attacking. Bleucorundum is less versed in aerial combat than he is in land-bound (or underground) engagements. He typically leads in with his breath weapon and follows up with a devastating claw/claw/bite routine. He employs frequent tail slaps and wing buffets, but he will intermix other moves as well. Bleucorundum immediately flees by means of his psionics or spell abilities

if brought to less than one-third of his total hit points. Bleucorundum speaks the tongue of sapphire dragons and the tongue common to all gem dragons and can communicate with any intelligent creature.

Bleucorundum casts spells and uses magical abilities at 16th level. Like all dragons, he cannot attack, use his breath weapon, use his magical abilities, or fly (except to glide) while casting a spell. The Sapphire Sentinel casts all spells with a casting time of 1. He has the following additional powers: *continual light* 3/day, *stone shape* 3/day, *anti-magic shell* 1/day, and *passwall* 6/day. (Assume that *passwall* creates an opening large enough for the dragon to pass through.)

Sapphire dragons have potent psionic abilities. Bleucorundum has 200 PSPs available per day and uses his abilities as an 18th level psionicist. He can employ the attack forms psionic blast and energy whip and the defense forms mind blank and intellect fortress. He is skilled in the use of clairsentient and psychoportive powers and employs the sciences teleport and clairvoyance and the devotions blink, phase, radial navigation, and teleport trigger. (Bleucorundum maintains a teleport trigger that immediately teleports him to a secret lair deep beneath the Kuldin Peaks if he drops to a third or less of hit total hit points, if his PSP total drops to 20 or below, or if he silently utters the monosyllabic word in the tongue of sapphire dragons that means "retreat.") Using the revised rules for psionics presented in *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills & Powers,* the dragon has MTHAC0 3, MAC 5, and has the Contact proficiency. If the DM does not wish to use psionics in the campaign, the following magical abilities can be substituted: *teleport* 2/day, *clairvoyance* 1/day, *blink* 1/day, *etherealness* (as the third-level priest spell in *PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*) or *phase door* 1/day, *know direction* (as the first-level priest spell in the *ToM*) 2/day, and *contingency* (can be employed only in conjunction with *teleport*) 1/day.

Sapphire dragons are born with an immunity to all forms of fear, as well as immunity to *web, hold, slow,* and paralysis. Bleucorundum saves as a an 18th-level fighter.

Wizard spells: *alarm, dancing lights; mirror image; dispel magic.*

Priest spells: *blessed watchfulness* (*PLAYER'S OPTION: Spells & Magic*), *weighty chest* (*ToM*); *hold person; neutralize poison.* If *blessed watchfulness* and *weighty chest* are not available, replace with *bless* and *sanctuary* respectively.

Magical Items: Bleucorundum employs several items of magic of an offensive and defensive nature. His right claw is enmeshed in a *dwarven fist* (*EM:V2,* p. 542). On the rightmost talon of his left rear claw, he wears a *spellbattle ring* (*EM:V3,* p. 999). On the leftmost talon of his right rear claw, he wears a *ring of gargoyles* (*EM:V3,* p. 965) with all six (crystal) gargoyles available.

Crystal gargoyles (6): INT low (7); AL N; AC 5; MV 9, Fl 15 (C); HD 4+4; hp 30 each; THAC0 15; #AT 4; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6/1d4; SD +1 or better weapons to hit; SZ M; ML 11; XP 420; *MM*/125.

Bleucorundum wears a mithril coronet inlaid with a single deep, rich black sapphire with white highlights on its brow. Although not truly magical items (as described in *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical*), black sapphires prevent temporal magics such as *Phezult's sleep of ages* from functioning within a 30' radius area of effect centered around the gem. *Phezult's sleep of ages* is not affected outside of the area of effect of a black sapphire, assuming the total region affected by the spell is greater than sphere affected by the gem. When a black sapphire is removed from an region under the effects of a *Phezult's sleep of ages,* the spell resumes normally. Assuming a black sapphire's area of effect never overlaps a creature in stasis for more than a few moments (2d4 rounds, the time it takes for a being to come out of the stasis created by a *Phezult's sleep of ages* spell), the gem has no effect other than to protect its bearer.

Personality: While not actively hostile, Bleucorundum is territorial and initially distrustful of anyone who comes near him or his lair. His view of history as a tapestry of warfare colors his every word or deed. When he speaks, his words are confusing medley of military jargon from countless long-forgotten armies. He only respects beings who have served in combat and is arrogantly dismissive of civilians and pacifists. The three most important virtues of life, as far as he is concerned, are honor, duty, and military preparedness. Bleucorundum is consumed by his self-appointed duty to protect the Sleeping Legion, he will do anything to ensure their safety.

The Sapphire Sentinel is lonely, and he would have sought out a mate long before now if he felt he could do so without neglecting his duties. If another creature (such as Artides the Finder) were to gain his trust and shared his interests, Bleucorundum would welcome the camaraderie.

History: Bleucorundum has laired in the heart of the Omlarandin Mountains since the destruction of the Ring of Eyes by the wandering sorceress Tashara of the Seven Skulls in the Year of Lost Wayfarers (757 DR). Before their destruction, the beholders who ruled Cortryn—now eastern Amn—killed the sapphire dragon's parents and siblings shortly after their minions stumbled across the dragons' lair deep beneath the lands ruled by the eye tyrants.

Bleucorundum fled south through the tunnels of Deep Shanatar to the mountain range east of Saradush, where he stumbled across the buried Chapel of the Blooded Moon. While the fighting men and dwarves of that military order had long been forgotten and their chapter house had been deliberately buried by a rockslide, the young sapphire dragon quickly discovered that many of the ancient warriors still survived through the magic of an enveloping stasis field. Bleucorundum discovered that the Knights of the Crescent Moon had been active in the Eye Tyrant Wars over nine centuries before his arrival, and that they still slumbered on in readiness for the day they would be needed once again to defend Tethyr from the beholders of the Lake of Steam, as had been prophesied by the Oracle of the Deepwash.

The dragon took it upon himself to serve as guardian for the Sleeping Legion and immediately established his lair amid the catacombs. The Sapphire Sentinel interwove his faith in the draconic deity Null with a newfound veneration of Clanggedin Silverbeard, one of the two divine patrons of the Axe-Brothers named in

the order's liturgy as the Rock of Battle, into a strict regimen if duty and code of conduct. (Bleucorundum does not venerate Selûne, the order's other patron, although he does view her respectfully.)

In the intervening years since Bleucorundum became the Sapphire Sentinel, the very old dragon has expanded his territory to include the subterranean lands of fallen Deep Shanatar stretching from Darromar (formerly Ithmong) to the High Peaks and from Impresk Lake to the Forest of Mir.

Lord Knight Commander of the Axe-Brothers

Bryth Moonaxe (male half-dwarf fighter/cleric—Champion): INT exceptional (16); AL LG; AC –2 (dwarven *plate mail +4*); MV 6; F9/C9; hp 88; THAC0 12 (11 with Strength bonus, 8 with *two-handed battle axe +3*); #AT 2/1; Dmg by weapon type, typically 1d10+6 (Strength, *two-handed battle axe +3*); SA turn undead; SD 120' infravision; S 18/17, D 12, C 18, I 16, W 17, Ch 15; SZ M; ML 18; *Dwarves Deep* (FR11), *The Complete Book of Dwarves.*

Notes: Bryth speaks Dwarvish, as well as Thorass (Auld Common), Alzhedo, Auld Wyrmish, Beholder, Genie Tongue, Giant, and Undercommon. His weapon proficiencies include axes, blades, and crossbows, with weapon specialization in the two-handed battle axe. His nonweapon proficiencies include Ancient History (High & Deep Shanatar), Endurance, Intimidation, Reading/Writing (Dethek Runes, Thorass), and Religion. Bryth venerates both Selûne and Clangeddin Silverbeard.

Two-handed battle axe: Size M, Type S, Speed Factor 9, and Damage 1d10/2d8.

Magical Items: Bryth is garbed in the legendary *Dark Mail of the Depths.* Traditionally worn by the crown prince of Deep Shanatar, this magical mail is forged of darksteel and magically adjusts in size to fit anyone of dwarven blood who dons it. In addition to serving as dwarven *plate mail +4*, the armor absorbs all natural and magical lightning or electrical energy into itself without conducting any of it—or its damage—to a wearer or being in contact with it. (See *Volo's Guide to All Things Magical* for more details on darksteel's properties.) Finally, this suit of armor automatically reduces the damage inflicted on the wearer by the breath weapon of any true dragon by half. If the wearer makes his or her saving throw vs. breath weapon, with a +3 bonus added by the Dark Mail, the magic of the armor prevents the wearer from suffering any damage at all. The other magical item in Bryth's possession is the *Axe of Velm, a two-handed battle axe +3 of quickness.*

Personality: The only child of First Axe Therlarn Axesong and Lady of the Seven Silver Stars Elhanna Moonhawk is a rugged individualist and a natural leader. While he can be personable, Bryth has little use for politics or intrigue and is usually blunt. The leader of the Axe-Brothers is extremely crafty, and he is not above using his apparent intransigence and straightforwardness as a negotiating tactic or as means of deceiving his opponents. The petty jealousies of both the two countries' nobilities and the two faiths' mainstream clergies that forced the knights' withdrawal from the world have instilled a deep distrust in Bryth. This deep, abiding doubt combined with his long-held cautiousness make Bryth extremely slow to open up to outsiders and wary of quick commitments. Once given, however, Bryth's word is absolute.

History: Bryth Moonaxe was born in the Year of Hale Heroes (–173 DR) and raised from birth to lead the Order of the Crescent Moon. There was never any question of favoritism, however, as Bryth never asked for (nor received) any nepotistic indulgences from either of his parents. Although too young to fight in the Eye Tyrant Wars, Bryth was active in nearly every major conflict thereafter in which the order participated.

Bryth was unanimously elected Lord Knight Commander of the Axe-Brothers. The young half-dwarf quickly found himself enmeshed in a constant struggle with rival orders of both Selûne and Clangeddin as well as the fractious court politics of Tethyr and Iltkazar. His efforts to extract the order from the intrigues of both kingdoms only deepened the order's political troubles. By the Year of Leather Shields (–75 DR), the order's disbanding seemed inevitable. Only Bryth's prescient preparations for the order's public dissolving enabled the knights to survive until they were needed once again.

The Elder Orb

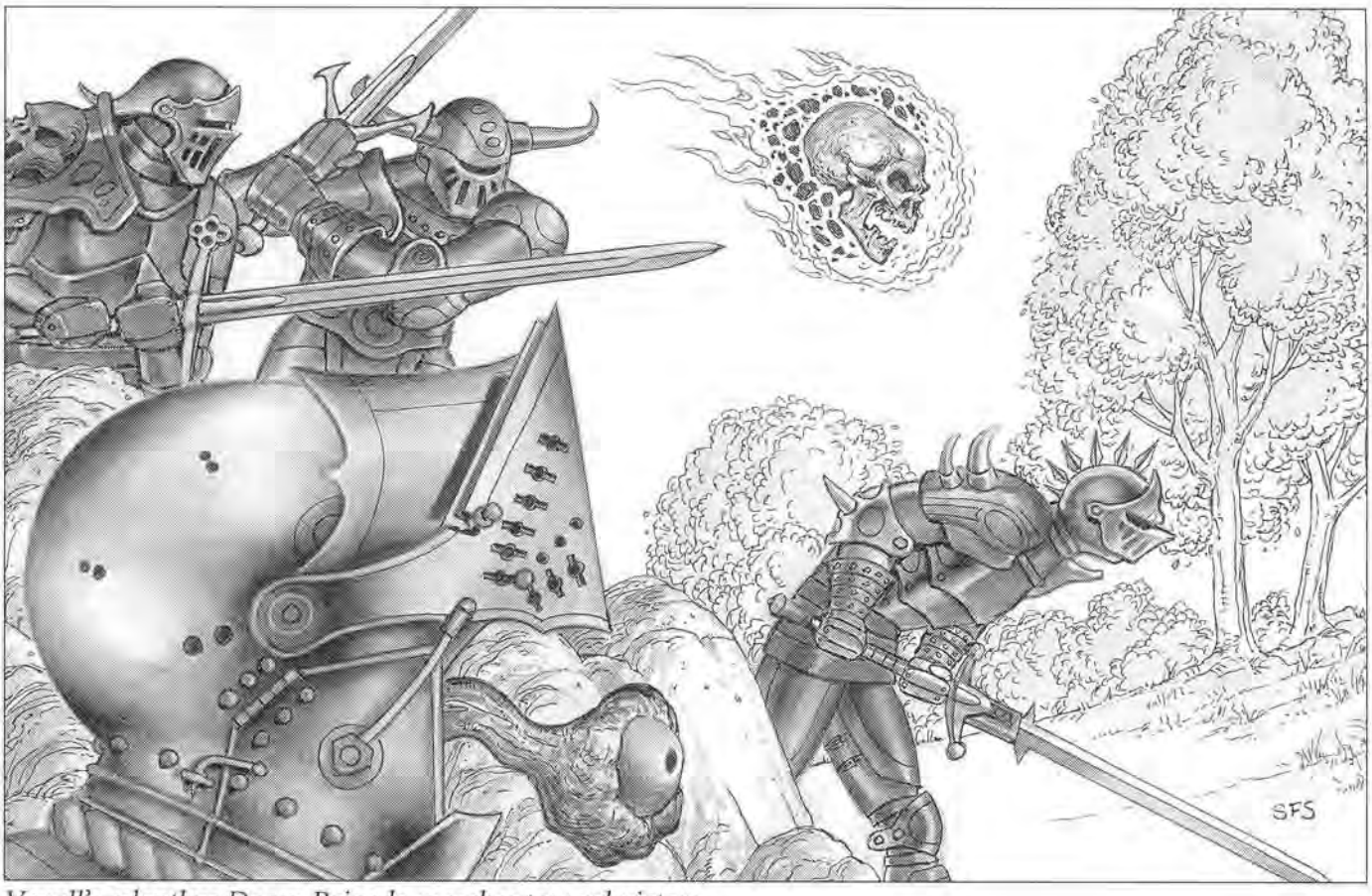
Vaxall of the Dying Gaze (elder orb beholder): INT godlike (22); AL LE; AC 0/2/7; MV Fl 3 (B); hp 74; THAC0 5; #AT 1; Dmg 2d4 (bite); SA magic; SD anti-magic ray; immunity to *sleep, charm,* and *hold* spells; immunity to 1st–4th level illusion spells; MR 50%; SZ M; ML 19; XP 18,000; *Ruins of Undermountain.*

Like standard beholders, Vaxall can generate various magical effects with its eyes. Vaxall has the following eye powers: *charm monster* (as spell); *sleep* (as spell, but only one target), *telekinesis* (250 lb. weight), *flesh to stone* (as spell, 30-yard range), *disintegrate* (20-yard range); *fear* (as wand); *slow* (as spell, but only a single target); and *cause serious wounds* (50-yard range). Vaxall has lost the use of his *charm person* and *death ray* powers.

Vaxall can only hold one spell of each spell level in its mind at a time but can cast them at 20th-level of ability. It must study spells as mages do to retain its spellcasting abilities.

Each smaller eye can withstand 5–12 hp damage before being destroyed. Such damage is over and above any damage done to the central body. The body can withstand 50 hp damage before the creature perishes. The central eye can withstand 24 hp damage before being destroyed. Unlike younger beholders, Vaxall cannot regenerate lost eyes or eyestalks.

Known Spells: *charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic, identify, read magic; blindness, displace self* (*WSC:V1,* p. 256), *knock, pyrotechnics; lightning bolt, Maximilian's stony grasp, water breathing, wraithform; control death tyrant* (*I, Tyrant* and *WSC:V1,* p. 177), *polymorph self, wizard eye; lower resistance, sending, stone shape, teleport, wall of blackstone* (*I, Tyrant*); *guards and wards, Otiluke's freezing sphere, project image; forcecage, teleport without error, Vaxall's doomstalk* (new spell); *clone, create death tyrant* (*I, Tyrant* and *WSC:V1,* p. 189), *mass charm, permanency; imprisonment,*



Vaxall's relentless Doom Brigade marches toward victory.

meteor swarm, prismatic sphere, shape change.

The Elder Orb may cast only one spell of each level, but its spells require verbal components only.

Personality: Vaxall is more tolerant and farsighted than most eye tyrants, viewing itself as the chief architect behind the resurgence of its kin on the western shores of the Lake of Steam. It serves both as leader and mediator of its hive, brooking little dissent.

Vaxall came to realize that if beholders were ever to regain their rightful positions of leadership in the region, they would have to learn again to work closely with the humans of the region and treat some of them more as trusted servants than slaves. Toward this objective, the Elder Orb has forged a strong working relationship with Teldorn Darkhope and the other Banites who compose the leadership of the Order of the Black Gauntlet. Vaxall has also become a relatively trusted ally of the enigmatic Twisted Rune.

History: Vaxall of the Dying Gaze is one of the oldest living eye tyrants of southwestern Faerûn—one of the last surviving descendants of the hive that once dominated the western Lake of Steam region over three millennia ago. Born in the Year of Eyes (1141 DR), Vaxall conquered much of the western Thornwood before its near-death at the swords of the Silk Blades (warriors from the Land of the Lions) in the Year of Embers (1201 DR). Severely chastened by its near defeat, Vaxall retreated to a secondary lair, allowing much of its "empire" in the Thornwood to disintegrate in its absence. After several months of introspection, Vaxall came to the conclusion that it needed to better understand humanity, the ancient nemesis of beholders, if it or its kin were ever to regain their ancient positions of power. Vaxall constructed a vast network of charmed minions throughout the Lake of Steam region and, through them, infiltrated much of the region's power structures. During this time, the eye tyrant devoured the contents of many ancient tomes and learned much of its ancestors efforts to regain control of the city-states on the Lake of Steam.

By the Year of Long Watch (1230 DR), Vaxall had reestablished its empire, but this demesne was a web of intrigue, not a physical domain. The beholder's rebuilt sphere of influence stretched from Llorbauth to Suldolphor and from Saelmur to the Forest of Mir, far greater in scope that its former domain. Vaxall had slowly come to realize that more powerful agents than it lurked in the deepest shadows and that it was but a pawn in a much larger struggle. When the lich Jhaniloth revealed herself to Vaxall, the beholder was both chastened to find its carefully-crafted empire no more than a hollow

New Spells

Earthward (Abjuration)

Level: 7 (Priest)
Sphere: Elemental (Earth), Wards
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 3 rounds
Area of Effect: 10-foot/level radius
Saving Throw: None

This powerful spell is available only to priests of the dwarven power Dumathoin, Keeper of Secrets Under the Mountain. Rarely it is granted by other powers of the dwarven pantheon to priests of the corresponding faiths. Since the number of dwarven priests in the Realms capable of casting seventh level spells (i.e. of 14th level or greater) is so limited, this spell is effectively unknown outside the elite ranks of the dwarven clergies and a handful of dwarven sages.

An *earthward* spell nullifies any magical item, spell, or spell effect within the school and/or sphere of elemental earth that falls wholly or partially within its area of effect. Thus an *earthward* nullifies wizard spells such as *dig, move earth, passwall,* and *transmute rock to mud* as well as priest spells such as *soften earth and stone, meld into stone, stone shape, stone tell,* and *earthquake.* It also nullifies the effects of a *wish* or *limited wish* that would emulate the effects of a wizard or priest spell of the school or sphere of elemental earth. Magical items such as *horns of blasting, horns of collapsing, lyres of building, mattocks of the titans, mauls of the titans, rings of earth elemental command, spades of colossal excavation, stones of controlling earth elementals, wands of earth and stone,* and *wands of metal and mineral detection* also do not function within the confines of an *earthward.* The only exception to the excluded class of magical effects is the *earthward* spell itself.

Magically summoned creatures from the Elemental Plane of Earth cannot pass within an area protected by an *earthward.* Spells to contact or summon creatures from that plane do not function within the radius of the spell.

An *earthward* has no effect on spells that do not fall within the elemental earth sphere. Thus spells such as *dimension door, disintegrate,* or *teleport* are not affected. Likewise an *earthward* has no effect on psionics, even those that emulate magical effects that fall within the school or sphere of elemental earth. An *earthward* has no effect on manual labor, including that which affects earth or stone.

An *earthward* requires a special focus. Within a one-inch-wide ring of diamond dust of at least one foot in diameter, the spellcaster must place at least six gems of 500 gp value, of any type. When the spellcasting is complete, four of the gems vanish, consumed in the act of releasing the spell's power. The rest fuel the *earthward* and dwindle slowly as time passes (roughly one year of stasis per 10 gp value).

Removing any gemstone from the circle of diamond dust or breaking the ring instantly ends the spell's effect. Otherwise the effect ends when the gems are used up. However, any number of gems that fit can be placed inside the ring at any time to "refuel" the spell and extend its duration.

Ray Refraction (Alteration)

Level: 2 (Wizard)
Range: 0
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 2 rounds + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 2
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

Similar in function to the first-level wizard spell *gaze reflection, ray refraction* creates a shimmering, prism-like area of air encircling the wizard that moves with the spellcaster. Any ray attack aimed at the spellcaster from any direction, such as a spell effect generated by a beholder's eyestalks, a *ray of enfeeblement,* a *ray of Ondovir,* and so on, is decomposed into harmless component rays, all of which deflect harmlessly away from the spellcaster. The scattered component beams of the ray also do not affect anyone else who happens to intersect their path. This spell does not affect vision or shell cloaking the lich's network and intrigued to learn more about wielding the levers of power from the far more powerful undead sorceress.

By the Year of Many Monsters (1233 DR), Vaxall was a trusted minion of the Jhaniloth and one of thirty or so full-fledged members of the Twisted Rune. Over the next century, Vaxall's organization was neatly absorbed into the sprawling network of agents serving the Runemasters, and the beholder participated in a wide range of intricate stratagems as the organization slowly spread its tentacles.

Vaxall has refounded the ancient beholder cults that once thrived on the western shores of the Lake of Steam and has established a capital in Mintar from which to eventually control the region through its minions known as the Knights of the Black Gauntlet. Behind this screen, Vaxall has drawn together a grand coalition of beholders and their death tyrants vassals. If Vaxall can hold the fiercely individualistic eye tyrants together for a few more months, the ancient eye tyrant has a reasonable chance of forging a new nation of unparalleled evil at the nexus of Amn, Tethyr, Calimshan, the lands of the Vilhon Reach, and the Shaar. Only at that point would Vaxall begin to turn its energies against the Runemasters who lurk behind its long-sought throne.

The Doom Brigade

The Doom Brigade is a company of ten helmed horrors created by Teldorn Darkhope by means of the *doom of Bane* spell (see *Faiths & Avatars* for details). Each horror is relatively free-willed, constrained only by an iron-strong loyalty to their commander, Gauntlet, and his master, Vaxall. Each horror wields a two-handed sword and bears a long sword for use in tight quarters. The entire Doom Brigade runs like a well-oiled machine with a single brain thanks to the telepathic coordination they receive from Gauntlet.

Vaxall typically casts its favorite incantation, *Vaxall's doomstalk,* on the Doom Brigade before sending them into the field. The spell's long duration enables the horrors to proceed on extended forays on the Elder

Orb's behalf. When the spell reaches the end of its duration, Vaxall usually *teleports* to their location, recasts *Vaxall's doomstalk*, and immediately *teleports* back to its lair. The Elder Orb typically casts its spell so that its stalks emerge from neck opening in each horror's body and are cloaked by their helms. When a horror wishes to employ the eye tyrant's eyestalk power, it simply lifts its visor and points its gaze towards the desired target. Vaxall, who can then see what is happening, then obligingly employs its spell effect as needed. Vaxall can also continuously observe what is going on remotely. Only eight (now seven) of the ten helmed horrors of the Doom Brigade have one of *Vaxall's eyestalks* hiding within their helms. The DM should determine which horror has which eyestalk (or none at all) prior to the Doom Brigade's first contact with the PCs, with the caveat that the doomstalk with disintegration powers has already been dispatched. (The elder orb, having lost its *charm person* and *death ray* eyes, can no longer create disembodied versions of these eyes using its *doomstalk* spell.)

Helmed horrors (10): INT high (14); AL LE; AC 2; MV 12, Fl 12 (A); HD 4+9; hp 30 each; THAC0 12; #AT 1 + special; Dmg 1d4 (weaponless blow) or by weapon type, typically 1d10 (two-handed swords) or 1d8 (long swords); SD see below; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 2,000; *MC Annual, Volume I*.

The senses of a horror permeate its entire form; a "dehelmed" horror can fight on. Portions of a horror's body that are separated from its main "body" suit of armor cease to move and cannot fight, but if brought back into contact with a horror, they will reattach. A horror cannot collect and reattach pieces of its own form.

Horrors maintain their stature through levitation. Thus they can "walk" on air or above surfaces, or function without any legs at all. This levitation allows flight but does not allow riders. They are protected by a persisting *feather fall* spell.

Horrors cannot be turned. They can see invisible creatures and objects up to 120 feet away and have infravision effective to the same range. Horrors are fearless and cannot be mentally controlled or influlighting and is not effective against creatures whose effect comes from being gazed upon (such as a medusa's passive gaze attack) or creatures with active gaze attacks (such as those warded against by a *gaze reflection* spell).

The material component of this spell is a small piece of clouded glass which is consumed during the spellcasting.

Vaxall's Doomstalk (Alteration)

Level: 7 (Wizard)
Range: Touch
Components: V
Duration: 1 day/level
Casting Time: 1 round/appendage
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

Vaxall's doomstalk, also known as *dimension appendage*, is a powerful incantation whose effects can be employed by any creature with one or more distinct appendages. The Elder Orb developed this spell as a method of remote investigation via one or more expendable proxies.

This spell can only be cast on the spellcaster or a willing recipient. If the target is unwilling, the spell dissipates without effect. During the casting of this spell, the target is physically touched by the spellcaster on an appendage (such as an arm, leg, tail, or eye stalk). (If the spellcaster is casting this spell on himself, he merely needs to visualize the location on its appendage where the spell will take effect.) Immediately thereafter, the spellcaster must physically touch an opening in a nonliving object of greater diameter than the selected appendage but less than twice its total diameter. This process is repeated for each appendage, but no more than one appendage may be linked with any given opening. Upon the completion of the spell, each appendage appears to vanish where it was touched (typically just below the shoulder or the arm, or near the base of an eye stalk) when inserted through a different opening of nearly equivalent diameter, reappearing through the linked portal in a fashion similar to the natural ability of a boggle. One appendage for every level of the spellcaster (to a maximum of ten appendages) can be linked by means of this spell.

These extra-dimensional links are maintained until the spell expires, the target or spellcaster withdraws a linked appendage from the corresponding local portal (only if all the links are broken does the spell terminate under this situation), either the target or its appendage attempts or is forced to travel to another plane of existence, or the remote portal is physically sundered. If a *dispel magic* or similar incantation is successfully cast upon an appendage, the effect is terminated for that limb only. But if a *dispel magic* or similar incantation is successfully cast upon the target itself, the entire spell effect is immediately terminated.

The target of the spell can manipulate its appendage normally, no matter what the distance between the creature and its limb. Any magical abilities that emanate from the appendage can be employed while under the effects of *Vaxall's doomstalk*, but those magical abilities continue to suffer standard restrictions. (A beholder could still only employ one eye stalk power per round while under the effects of a *Vaxall's doomstalk*.) It is not possible to cast spells through the remote appendage, and spells that require somatic components involving the appendage cannot be employed while the target is under the effect of this spell. Sensory inputs of all sorts are transmitted by the magic of this spell, but physical substances such as swallowed foods, poisons, and enveloping atmospheres are not transmitted. Damage inflicted on the appendage affects not only the appendage, but the entire creature's hit point total, if appropriate. (For example, if an Elder Orb employs this spell and a remote eyestalk is damaged, the Elder Orb's central body is unaffected. If a human wizard employs this spell and a remote arm is damaged, the wizard's entire hit point total is affected.)

The material component for this spell is a pint of fresh boggle blood harvested within the last 24 hours or preserved by a spell such as the *preservation* (detailed in the *Spellbound* boxed set).

New Magical Items

Amulet of Petrification Reversal

The *amulet of petrification reversal* is indistinguishable from any other sort of magical amulet. When worn or carried, it provides a +3 bonus to all saving throws versus petrification. This effect is always active and never requires any charges.

If the bearer of an *amulet of petrification reversal* is petrified by any means (*flesh to stone* spell, medusa's gaze, beholder eye ray, etc.), despite the saving throw bonus, the magic of the amulet slowly reverses the process (resembling that of a slow-acting *stone to flesh* spell) over the next twenty-four hour period. During this interval, the newly created statue slowly metamorphosizes into its original component pieces. Any damage to the statue incurred after the bearer's petrification but prior to the effect's annulment (particularly broken appendages and chipped surfaces) is automatically repaired during this process. Only the effects of *disintegrate, transmute rock to mud* spells, or similar magical effects cannot be repaired in this fashion. If, during the transformation, the process is set back by means of another petrification attack, the amulet continues its slow reversal of the effect. Once the petrification effect is completely reversed or the bearer is no longer composed of rock, the magic of the amulet is spent, and the amulet crumbles to dust.

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 7,500

Dust of Dispersion

This fine powder appears like any other dust barring careful examination. Such an investigation reveals it to be minute, reflective particles of some unknown mineral. A single handful of this substance flung into the air twinkles and glimmers, distorting and obscuring vision in a ten foot cubic region for up to 5 rounds.

Any being within the 10' × 10' × 10' area of effect receives a saving throw versus any ray attack. Ray attacks include spell effects generated by beholder eyestalks, a *ray of enfeeblement,* a *ray of Ondovir*, and so on; these are partly decomposed into harmless component rays, reducing their chance of affecting a target. In the first round after a packet of *dust of dispersion* is tossed into the air, all beings within the affected region receive a +5 saving throw bonus against any ray attacks. In subsequent rounds, this bonus drops to +4, then +3, then +2, and finally +1 as the *dust of dispersion* slowly falls to the ground. Once employed, the magic of this powder is spent, and, even if the dust was reconstituted, it is thereafter useless.

Dust of dispersion is typically stored in small silk packets or hollow bone blow tubes, and 1d4 such packages are typically found at once.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 1,500

Guardian

Guardian is a *two-handed sword +4, defender* forged centuries ago by an unknown duergar smith of the Marching Mountains and then enchanted by the lich Jhaniloth. The weapon served many long-forgotten warriors before it was gifted to the battle horror known as Gauntlet by its master, Vaxall, who had inherited it from Jhaniloth.

The straight mithral blade and steel pommel wrapped in bullette-skin leather is simple in style and unadorned by any markings. The steel hand-guard ends in two small human skulls, and the pommel ends in a similar steel skull twice the size of the other two carvings.

Guardian is Lawful Evil in alignment, has an Intelligence of 13, Ego of 6, and Personality of 19. It has the unique power to *teleport without error* itself and its bearer 1/day (typically to a place of safety), even if the bearer is unconscious or dead (in which case the sword chooses the destination itself). *Guardian* communicates via semi-empathy.

XP Value: 4,500 **GP Value:** 11,000

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enced by magical or other means that work on the mind or senses. A horror can be contacted by *ESP* or similar spells, but it cannot be affected by illusions or charm magics (such as *hold person, sleep,* or *suggestion*). Any mental contact with a horror allows the horror to read the current surface thoughts and emotions of the being contacting it, despite any defenses or evasions. *Magic missile* spells cast at a horror "heal" it of any damage by restoring its bonding energy. Excess hit points are not gained by the horror but are reflected back 100% at the caster. The horrors of the Doom Brigade have been enchanted to be completely immune to the spells *fireball, heat metal,* and *lightning bolt.*

Gauntlet (Battle Horror)

Gauntlet leads the Doom Brigade. Unlike others of its kind, Gauntlet is fitted with *helm of telepathy.* While its helm is attached to its "body", Gauntlet can communicate with the helmed horrors of the Doom Brigade at will and can thus coordinate their tactics with pinpoint precision. In addition, by means of the magical helm, the battle horror can read the surface thoughts of any sentient creature, giving it an impressive edge in combat. Finally, Gauntlet wields *Guardian,* a powerful sword described in the adjacent sidebar.

Battle horror: INT high (14); AL LE; AC 2 (–2 with *Guardian*); MV 12, Fl 12 (A); HD 4+9; hp 41; THAC0 12 (8 with *two-handed sword +4*); #AT 1 + special; Dmg: 1d4 (weaponless blow) or 1d10+4 (*two-handed sword +4*); SA spell abilities; SD see invisible creatures and objects, spell immunities; MR special; SZ M; ML special; XP 4,000; *MC Annual, Volume I.*

Battle horrors have the abilities of helmed horrors and some additional powers. They can *dimension door* (range 60 yards), 1/day. They can *blink* for up to 1 turn, 1/day, but a battle horror cannot cease blinking and start again, even if it has not used a full turn. Lastly, a battle horror can unleash two 1d4+1 hp *magic missiles* every three rounds with a range of 70 yards.

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Shield of Refraction

A *shield of refraction* can appear as any type of shield, but is most commonly found in the form of a buckler. In addition to its normal defensive uses, a *shield of refraction* serves as single-use magical item. The bearer of a *shield of refraction* can choose to create the effects of a *ray refraction* spell (see "New Spells" sidebar) against any single ray attack. However, once the *ray refraction* effect of a *shield of refraction* is employed, the shield crumbles to worthless dust.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 1,000

Tyrantblade

Similar to *spellblades* (EM:V4, p. 1404), these slim-bladed swords afford immunity to a particular type of beholder or beholder-kin eye attack specific to each particular weapon. Whereas a *spellblade* protects against a particular spell, a *tyrantblade* can only negate a particular eye attack.

Unlike *spellblades, tyrantblades* do not allow the wielder to reflect the eye attack back at the attacking eye tyrant or at another target, but a *tyrantblade* does have the additional property of being completely immune to the *anti-magic ray* of a true beholder. (This immunity does not transfer to the bearer—it simply allows the *tyrantblade* to function even if the *anti-magic ray* is brought to bear against the wielder in conjunction with the warded eye attack.)

As an item, a *tyrantblade* is usable by all classes; as a weapon, it is usable only by those allowed to wield swords. To gain the protection of a *tyrantblade,* the sword must be drawn from its scabbard with some part of the hilt or blade resting on the bearer's flesh (for example, in the unclad hand of a warrior or strapped to the bare leg of a wizard).

Tyrantblades are treated as *long swords +1* for attack purposes.

XP Value: 1,300 **GP Value:** 3,200

Bestiary of Beholders

Bestiaries are indistinguishable from other magical bestiaries, books, librams, manuals, spellbooks, and tomes by visual examination or by magical detection. They are magical repositories of wisdom concerning a certain race or species of monster. Each such tome discusses the subject race's biology, culture, language, abilities, typical combat strategies, and overall drives.

Because of their precious content, bestiaries are usually protected by magical beasts such as tome guardians or guardian yugoloths or magical wards such as *sepia snake sigils, explosive runes,* or *symbols.*

Each work contains secret formulae that enable a single reader to assimilate the text (a process requiring three days of uninterrupted study) and then practice the skills detailed therein. If this practice is faithfully done for one month, the character gains a permanent +1 bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and saving throws versus innate abilities (if any) of the creature described therein. In addition, the character can answer any question posed about the creature described therein as a sage with an exclusive focus on that particular species. (See **Table 62** in the *DUNGEON MASTER Guide.*) The *bestiary* disappears immediately after reading, but the contents are remembered forever.

A *bestiary of beholders* is concerned with all manner of eye tyrants and their kin. At the DM's option, an effective means of role-playing the effects of studying a bestiary of beholders, as described above, is to allow the PC unlimited access to the supplement *I, Tyrant.*

XP Value: 3,000 **GP Value:** 10,000

Skullpyr (Flameskull)

Skullpyr was fashioned from the skull of the Sultan of Mintar's former Court Sorcerer, Pyrax of the Ebon Skull, who was killed during the initial battle in the sultan's throne room preceding the city's capture by the Knights of the Black Gauntlet. Shortly thereafter, Skullpyr was created by the Banite priests and giving the task of protecting Gauntlet.

The flameskull has never left Gauntlet's immediate vicinity. It sometimes hides beneath the battle horror's helm (a horrific effect with the flames leaking through the visor), but normally it trails slightly above and behind the battle horror.

Flameskull: INT exceptional (16); AL LE; AC 3; MV Fl 20 (A); HD 4+4; hp 27; THAC0 17; #AT 2 + special; Dmg 2d4 × 2 (gouts of flame); SA spell use; SD regenerates 1 hp/round; spell immunities; MR 88%; SZ S; ML 16; XP 2,000; *MC Annual, Volume I.*

Skullpyr can speak Common, Alzhedo, and Thorass. The flameskull can spew fire from its mouths twice per round, in gouts up to 10 feet long. Normally Skullpyr casts an attack spell every other round interspersed with *spell reflection* incantations (see below). However, if a foe seems to be predicting its spell choices, the flameskull varies the pattern.

Skullpyr can cast one spell per round by verbal means only. It has three attack spells available: *magic missile, flame strike,* and *ice storm.*

Skullpyr can cast *spell reflection,* which returns any and all cat spells reaching the flameskull in the round back on their caster(s). If the spells inflict damage, they inflict normal damage to the casters. If not, they are merely negated.

Flameskulls are immune to mind-affecting spells like *charm person, sleep, hold,* and *fear*; they are also immune to cold, fire, heat, and electrical attacks.

Flameskulls are turned as liches. They regenerate and reassemble even after being shattered unless a *dispel magic, exorcise,* or *remove curse* is cast upon their remains, or the majority of their bone fragments are doused in holy water. Ω